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# Charles City Strategic Plan for Sustainable Riverfront Development: Paddling Into the Future

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# Charles City Strategic Plan for Sustainable Riverfront Development: Paddling into the Future

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## Introduction

The Cedar River runs through the heart of downtown Charles City. Charles City's Main Street and downtown district, including City Hall and Hy-Vee, are located within a few minutes' walk from the river banks. Currently, the northern bank of the river features a grassy, mostly unused, public park. However, following the 2008 Flood, the City began developing ideas to take advantage of the open space in a way that would efficiently utilize the space while also creating more naturalized environment that may mitigate some flood risks. Based on recommendations from Iowa State University and Recreation Engineering and Planning, the City decided to transform the existing riverfront park into a recreational waterfront attraction including a white water course. The Riverfront Park will involve the redevelopment of 26 acres of ground and 11 acres of water, including transforming the existing low-head dam into a ¼ mile whitewater play area.

By developing the whitewater course, the City will not only be adding an attractive feature to the community, it will also eliminate the hazard associated with the low-head dam and improve the habitat for fish and other wildlife. Banks of the river will also be naturalized to mitigate some flood risks and improve the overall ecology of the river. Other features of the Riverfront Park will include a boat launch, amphitheater, recreational trails, restrooms, a picnic gazebo, a storm water fountain, an imaginative play area including a labyrinth.

Construction of the whitewater course began in the fall of 2010 and is expected to be completed this summer. The boat dock is completed, and the other features are currently either undergoing bidding or in the pre-construction phase. The project is expected to cost about \$1.65 million in total, and the City has received about \$1.3 million in federal and state grants and in-kind donations.

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this plan is to recommend solutions to enhance downtown Charles City by maximizing the potential of the riverfront development as an attraction for visitors, businesses, and residents. The specific issues that will be addressed include: needs and expectations of kayaker and non-kayaker visitors, downtown revitalization, and water quality. Sustainability will be at the forefront in all phases, to keep Charles City as America's Hometown.

The downtown revitalization element will present opportunities to stimulate activity and investment within the downtown by targeting the interests of potential visitors attracted to the riverfront development. The riverfront development element will identify opportunities to physically connect the riverfront to the downtown and make the riverfront attractive for recreational tourists, kayak competitors, and residents of Charles City and Floyd County. It will also examine ways to meet the short-term and long-term needs and expectations of recreational tourists. The water quality element will focus on improving the quality of water flowing into the riverfront kayaking course through researching the feasibility of alternative water quality mechanisms.

This plan is organized in three sections: Riverfront Park Attraction and Amenities, Downtown Business Development, and Water Quality Research. The following is a summary of recommendations culminated through eight months of research, interviews, and public input gathered during the March 29, 2011 meeting held in the Charles City Council Chambers. Although the recommendations are organized by topic, they are not meant to be mutually exclusive. It is also important to note this section is meant to serve as a brief summary. More detailed is provided in the following sections of the plan.

### Riverfront Park Attractions and Amenities

1. **Host a kick-off event to promote the kayak course, such as a kayak competition or festival.** Based on our research, Charles City's kayak course is suitable for a number of competition events. We feel a kick-off event will serve to attract kayakers to the new park and create positive publicity. Charles City's experience hosting RAGBRAI demonstrates the City has the local capacity to host such an event.
2. **Promote the kayak course using social media and other Internet resources, and build relationships with kayak communities.** We had great success in reaching the kayak community through social media such as Facebook, and other national kayak organization websites. We feel using social media is optimum solution to keep kayakers informed and excited about the kayak course. Currently Facebook features over 100 existing kayak groups that could be targeted for marketing. The Midwest also has a number of kayak clubs and universities who may be interested in working with Charles City. Building relationships with these organizations could develop a sense of connection and camaraderie among local kayakers for the Charles City kayak course.
3. **Create a larger trail network for better hiking and biking.** Because hiking and biking are among kayaker's favorite activities, we feel Charles City should be creating a better trail

network. Charles City's existing Charley Western Trail and Riverside Trail are located near the Riverfront Park. However, the Riverfront Trail, which is directly accessible from the Riverfront Park, is only about one mile long and lacks a connection to the Charley Western Trail. If the City is successfully able to connect the two trail systems, it would create about five linear miles of trail, a feasibly length to accommodate hiking/ biking.

4. **Promote off-season uses to ensure year-round interest in the park.** Attracting visitors to the park during the winter months could help sustain any existing or new businesses that serve recreational tourists. If the City is able to create a more extensive trail network, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing could attract visitors to Charles City during the colder months. In addition, winter events such as snow sculpture or igloo competitions, or lights festivals would be a great way for community to use the park during the winter.
5. **Host a naming and logo competition.** It is important for Charles City to give the park a unique identity as a way to distinguish it from other kayak parks. Currently the park is called Riverfront Park. However, "riverfront" is fairly common; a number of parks throughout Iowa and the Midwest have similar names. In fact, the City of Yorkville, Illinois is currently developing a whitewater park that is named the Bicentennial Riverfront Park. We recommend the City challenge the community to create a more unique and identifiable name and logo for the park. The winning name and logo would be displayed at the entrance of the park.

## Downtown Businesses

1. **Recruit an Outfitter / Kayak Tourism Business.** Our study showed that nearly every kayak course location has at least one business that provided equipment rental and instructional lessons. This is primarily due to the specialized equipment, including special whitewater boats, required for whitewater kayak courses. Regular kayaks and canoes can be dangerous if used in a whitewater area, and whitewater boats are equally dangerous to use without basic instructions.
2. **Provide onsite rental of inflatable kayaks, canoes, and inner tubes.** Although whitewater boats require instructional lessons to ensure safety, inflatable boats can be used safely by novices with little or no lessons. Providing onsite rentals of these boats would allow residents who are unfamiliar with whitewater parks to take advantage of the new community asset. It would also serve as the primary rental option if the City is initially unsuccessful at recruiting an outfitter or kayak tourism business.
3. **Industry Recommendations.** Our recommendations focus on industries that have the most potential to grow because of the riverfront development. Some industries we examined were hotel and lodging, restaurants and bars, mobile food vendors, and other recreation, retail and entertainment businesses. These were the industries found most in kayak towns and most appreciated by kayakers.

4. **Help acquire financial incentives for redevelopment of upper floor office space in existing downtown buildings.** Downtown storefronts are dominated by office use, rather than retail and service sector businesses. If the upper floors of exiting business were renovated, there would be sufficient opportunity to move ground floor office space to the second level, thereby creating an opportunity to market the ground floor units to businesses that would benefit most by storefronts. In addition, property owners might be able to lower rents, thus reducing barriers for businesses to move in, if they are able to collect income from multiple tenants. Redevelopment of upper-floor units could be encouraged through use of CBDG funding available from the State. Although Charles City is not an entitlement community, the City has demonstrated success with grant applications, so we feel acquiring outside funding is a feasible option.
5. **Utilize the empty lot at Clark and Main Streets as an asset to attract kayak-related businesses.** The empty lot near Clark and Main Streets is in a prime downtown location and is sufficiently large to serve most kayak-related businesses. In fact, this location may be suitable for an outfitter or kayak tourism business. Because at least part of the lot is owned by the City, the City may consider providing financial incentives, such as reduced acquisition cost, to attract a business that would serve kayak tourists.
6. **Encourage redevelopment along the south side of the river.** There are a number of underutilized and/or vacant properties south of the river that provides a great opportunity for future tourism-oriented businesses. Our research shows Charles City has significant gaps in retail businesses and full service restaurants. Although most of the north side of the river is developed, the proximity of these underutilized properties on the south side provides the perfect location for new businesses development.
7. **Provide a temporary loading / unloading parking area close to the boat launch.** Parking directly adjacent the whitewater course is limited due to existing development along the river. However, parking within a short walking distance is abundant and could easily serve the needs of kayakers if a loading and unloading area is provided. Our survey indicates easy and convenient access to the water is a high priority for kayakers visiting a whitewater park.
8. **Provide good wayfinding.** The riverfront park is located in close proximity to a number of attractions and amenities, including Charles City's downtown. Good wayfinding would ensure visitors are aware of these attractions, and find other important amenities such as parking and lodging. It is also a way to make the City more visually attractive to visitors.



## Water Quality and Water Credit Trading

Although our project included an examination of solutions to Charles City's water quality, our research and recommendations are preliminary. Instituting a long-term solution for water quality will be an iterative process more thoroughly undertaken by the City in the future. The goal of our work was to lay the foundation for Charles City's future initiatives. As such, water quality is addressed in a separate working document, and will not be discussed in depth by this plan.

## Public Participation

A public input session was held on March 29, 2010 from 6 pm to 8 pm in the Charles City Council Chambers. The meeting served as an opportunity to inform the public about the Field Problems project and ongoing development of the Riverfront Park, as well as to gather citizen input regarding amenities for the Riverfront Park, business development, and ways to maximize the park's potential. About 60 members of the public attended and gave feedback regarding eight pre-determined discussion topics show in the table below.



About 60 members of the public attended the March 29, 2011 public input session.

The meeting began with a brief presentation that explained the collaborative project between the University of Iowa's School of Urban and Regional Planning Field Problems Project and the City of Charles City. Following the presentation, participants were broken into five small groups where they brainstormed answers to the discussion questions. Students from the Field Problems group served as facilitators and recorders. After the group brainstormed a number of ideas for each question, the facilitators challenged each group to identify the top choice for each question. The table below shows the top responses for each question. Additional responses are provided in the Appendix 1.

Following the break-out session, the participants regrouped and each facilitator shared the groups' top answer. The meeting then concluded with a question and answer session. Input from the meeting informed the recommendations contained within this plan.

### Break-out Session Top Answers

1. *If a visitor asked you what one thing they should see or do while in Charles City, it would be...*

- **The Public Art/Mooney Collection/Art Center**
- **History Museum or Art Collection at the library**
- **Riverfront and public art**
- **Tractor museum**
- **People**

2. *What about the Riverfront Park are you most excited about?*

- **Economic Impact**
- **Diversity and Tourism**
- **Entertainment and opportunity for tourists**
- **Bringing new people to town and exposing people to what the Midwest is about**
- **Economic Impact**



Brainstorming during break-out session.

3. *What about the Riverfront Park are you most concerned about?*

- **Maintenance/Upkeep (logs, trees, vandalism) (2 Groups)**
- **Liability**
- **Will it get promoted enough/ Iowa Tourism Guide**
- **Accountability**

4. *How do you foresee using the Riverfront Park?*

- **Entertainment**
- **Spending more time at the river**
- **Spectating (2 Groups)**
- **Picnic use and family entertainment**

5. *What business do you think is most lacking in Charles City?*

- **Outdoor outfitter/ Kayak Rental (3 Groups)**
- **Retail of any kind**
- **Retail/specialty shops**

6. *What amenities or features would you most like to see included in the Riverfront Park?*

- **Interactive signage (smartphone apps)**
- **Access for disabled and elderly**
- **Economic development/beverage stand**
- **Events – nightlife**

7. *What winter activities do you want to see in the Riverfront Park?*

- **Cross country skiing**
- **Festivals in the winter – Cabin Fever (sledding, shoeing, skating)**
- **Ice sculpting contest**
- **Snow sculptures**

8. *What do you think the park should be named?*

- **Cedar River Water Park**
- **C.C. Whitewater or C.C. Wacky Water Park**
- **Something w/ Cedar / Cedar Run**
- **Have a contest to name it**
- **Phrase with “Weiß Wasser” in it (means “White Water” in German)**

## **Riverfront Park Attractions and Amenities**

### **Summary of Recommendations**

In this section of our report we examine the wants, needs, and other concerns of kayakers. We used several methods to accomplish this such as performing research on the internet, hosting online survey, and collecting primary and secondary account of the impact that kayaks parks have made in other communities. Some of the recommendations we outline for Charles City include using social media outlets, hosting periodic events at the new kayak park, collaboration with kayak clubs and organizations, and instituting off season recreational opportunities. These recommendations are discussed in greater detail throughout this section along with other topics that we feel are important when it comes to understanding kayak culture.

### **History of Kayaking**

Experts estimate that the world’s first kayak boats were made around the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D by the natives of the arctic regions in Asia, North America, and Greenland. The first boats made were fashioned out of driftwood and wrapped with animal skins. The boats were small, lightweight, portable, and perfect for stealthy hunting in the icy waters of the North Atlantic. The word “Kayak” translates to “hunter’s boat”, as that was its primary purpose (1). These boats allowed hunters to sneak up undetected on prey along the shoreline. Over time, the Inuit Eskimo tribes of North America made several modifications, such as placing seal bladders filled with air in the boats making them virtually unsinkable. In addition to kayak’s, Inuit’s also constructed larger boats called “umiaqs”, which were used to carry large animals and possessions from place to place (2).

It was not until the Mid-1800’s when kayak’s started appearing in Europe where they were used for both their traditional hunting uses and also for recreation. The popularity of the boats as an outdoor activity grew mainly throughout Germany and France over the following decades. As the years passed people started becoming more adventurous with the boats and began kayaking in more trying waters. In 1931, a man named Adolf Anderle became the first person to kayak down the Salzachofen Gorge in Germany. This act is what many consider to be the birth of modern white-water (1). Soon after this event, the International Scale of River Difficulty was

established to classify how dangerous a river's rapids are. This is the same classification system that is used today by modern rapids enthusiasts.

In 1936, kayaking as a sporting competition received worldwide exposure as it became an official event at the Olympic Games in Berlin (1). The only kayaking events held this first year were flat water races, where competitors race one another in an attempt to reach the finish line fastest. Soon after the 1936 Olympics, kayaking appeared in America as a distant fringe sport. In the 1950's, fiberglass kayaks started being produced which increased the total supply of kayaks across the world. These fiberglass boats were faster to produce than tradition kayaks and despite their high cost helped get more people active in the sport. In the 1980's polyethylene plastic kayaks were introduced into the industry and were far less expensive to produce than fiberglass boats (2). The lower cost allowed for kayaks to become more readily available for rent or purchase. The advent of the plastic kayak helped boost the sport from the outer fringe to a mainstream outdoors activity.

Today, kayaking is still growing in popularity throughout many different demographic groups. The first group of people to adopt the kayaking was the outdoors and whitewater thrill-seeking type. They became infatuated with the sport and the rush it provided as they navigated through raging rapids. Today, everyone from young children to seniors participate in kayaking. Aside from the competitive and whitewater kayaking scene, there is a growing number of people who seek kayaking for recreational and relaxation purposes. Over the last couple decades, many towns have constructed kayak parks and host annual kayak competitions. Many businesses and outfitters have begun offering kayak rentals to the general public and provide people with a place to learn about and purchase kayak related equipment. The technical advancements in the sport have helped further the popularity of kayaking, and have made participation in the industry both rewarding and lucrative.

Appendix 2 of this document provides a list of current Whitewater Kayak Parks. We examined the 20 towns listed in bold and looked for aspects in which they are similar to Charles City, to help us as we developed our recommendations for the City. This will be discussed further in our Business Section.

## **Whitewater Rapids**

The International Scale of Whitewater River Difficulty defines six different classifications of rapids. The classifications range from Class I (the easiest and best for beginners) to VI (which can be dangerous and is intended for experts only). This grading scale is based on the three primary factors that create rapids. First, is gradient, or the rate at which a body of water loses elevation along a course. Second, is constriction, which occurs when a river's flow is forced into a narrower channel than the one it is currently traveling in. Third, is obstructions, such as boulders or other objects in the waterway that disrupt the waters natural flow (3). The rapids in Charles City are anticipated to be between a II and a III, which is the maximum allowable classification for public Whitewater Parks funded by a city. Below is a brief summary of the characteristics of each class of rapids (3).

- **Class 1:** no rapids, smooth flowing water.
- **Class 2:** some rough water--the line is easy to see and pursue.
- **Class 3:** whitewater but very safe for larger rafts; kayakers and canoeists should have good rolling or self-rescue skills.
- **Class 4:** whitewater for experienced paddlers only; the route through the rapids may require quick maneuvering.
- **Class 5:** whitewater for advanced paddlers; scouting the rapid may be required, and there may be hidden hazards which require precise maneuvering.
- **Class 6:** impassable or exploratory; for teams of experts, taking all safety precautions.

To handle the different classes of rapids and water types there are a wide variety of kayaks available for purchase and rentals. There are four main types of kayaks which are outlined in the table below (4).

<b>Ocean or sea</b>	Used for touring or expeditions, these kayaks are usually long and built to be seaworthy. Sea kayaks are well suited to inland flat water (lakes, bays, rivers) but are not maneuverable enough to be effective in whitewater. Sea kayaks can be designed specifically for speed, stability, and with storage space for long trips. Tandem (built for two) and sailing models are available.
<b>Whitewater</b>	Typically shorter and more maneuverable, some styles are designed specifically for play while others are more suited to all day trips.
<b>Recreational or crossover</b>	Suited for multiple uses, the crossover may be designed for sea, flat water or whitewater. Some crossovers are designed for performance while others may be better suited to paddling around, fishing, or casual play. Tandem (built for two) models are available.
<b>Specialty</b>	Our term for "everything else," includes traditional skin on frame, wooden, inflatable, and folding kayaks. At this time, WickedWaters.com does not sell specialty kayaks.

The length of kayaks can range from upwards of 20 feet for those designed for the ocean, all the way down to 6 feet for whitewater play boats. Also, Ocean and sea kayaks tend to sit deeper in the water and whitewater play boats sit further out in order to maneuver the kayak to perform tricks and stunts. As a general rule of thumb, the shorter and wider kayaks provide more maneuverability and the longer and skinnier ones provide better forward movement through the water and a much higher top speed.

Kayaks also fall into one of three structural classes which are rigid, folding, or inflatable. Rigid kayaks are what typically come to mind when one thinks about kayaking. They are most commonly made out of plastic or fiberglass. Plastic boats are the heaviest but are the least expensive, and can usually take the most abuse in the water before they require repairs or replacement. Fiberglass kayaks weigh less than plastic ones but are considerably more expensive and are more susceptible to damage. Almost all of the kayaks used at competitions in events will be made out of plastic or fiberglass. In addition to plastic and fiberglass, there are kayaks made out of composite materials such as Kevlar, graphite, and carbon fiber. These boats are the most expensive but weigh the least amount of all (5).

Folding Kayaks are another structural class of kayaks. These are boats that are made by stretching a fabric over a wood or aluminum frame. The cost of these boats is on the higher side of the kayak market but they are ideal for individuals who travel a lot and have limited storage space. These kayaks closely resemble those used by the early North American tribes in the North Atlantic. These boats can be very fast and durable, but are only suitable for flat water uses cannot be used in a whitewater environment (5).

Lastly there are inflatable kayaks which are the least expensive option and can be easily transported from one place to another. Inflatable kayaks have proven to be surprisingly durable and work well in mid-grade rapids. Due to their relative low price and easy storage, inflatable boats such as kayaks are a popular choice of businesses that offer kayak rentals to the public. These kayaks only need to be dried off before be stored virtually anywhere (5).

### **Kayaker Survey**

The survey's we conducted had a relatively small sample size and were administered to our targeted subset of the population. Therefore, these findings are not representative of the views of the general population or even kayakers in general. Our results can only possibly represent the views of people active in kayak clubs in the upper Midwest with any degree of confidence. With that said, below is a summary of what we feel were the main take home points that were obtained through our survey.

- The average age of kayakers in our survey was higher than we expected.
- The range of ages of those active in the sport was wider than we thought.
- Kayakers travel further distances to kayak than expected and do so more frequently.
- The most popular choice for lodging while on camping trips is a local campground
- Slalom was the most enjoyable event to compete in and watch, but only by a slim margin.
- Kayakers like to experience restaurants, shops, attractions, and tourism that are unique to the area they are staying.
- Kayakers usually travel with at least one other person and enjoy socializing with others who are interested in kayaking.

### **Kayakers Preferences**

In order for our team to properly assess the potential impact of Charles City's new kayak park, we first had to understand who exactly kayakers are, and what their needs, wants, and preferences are. To accomplish this we decided to conduct a survey of kayakers. We employed the help of kayak clubs who have plenty of members that frequently participate in the sport. Our team contacted a number of kayak clubs and organization from around the Midwest. We explained what we were doing and asked if they would be willing to pass along a link to our online survey via their organizations email database. We had three organizations respond positively to our inquiry and enthusiastically agreed to help us. The groups that worked with us through the surveying process were the Missouri Whitewater Association out of St. Louis Missouri, the Wausau Kayak and Canoe Club in Wisconsin, and the St. Cloud State University Outdoors Club in Minnesota.

We decided it would be most time and cost effective to put a survey together and host it through one of the many online survey providers. With our research we wanted to discover if there were any differences in the interests of those who kayak recreationally and those who attend kayak competitions. To accomplish this task we decided to create two separate, 12 question surveys, one for each group of kayakers. The email that was sent to the participating groups contained instructions where we asked that only those who have attended a kayak competition to complete the second survey, and for all members to complete the survey general kayaking questionnaire. It was also decided to further promote our survey through the use of social media outlets, in this case facebook.com. There are several pages on Facebook.com that are dedicated for Kayak and Whitewater enthusiasts, so we posted the links to our surveys on their message boards in an attempt to obtain responses from kayakers located places other than the Upper Midwest. The site we chose to host our survey was Zoomerang.com. Listed below are the questions that were asked in each of the two short surveys.

### **General Kayaking Survey:**

- Please indicate your gender.
- Please select the category that includes your age.
- How many years have you been involved with the sport of kayaking?
- On average, how many times a year do you go kayaking?
- How far do you usually travel to go Kayaking?
- How far would you travel to try a new kayak play park?
- Who typically travels with you on your kayaking trips?
- How many days does your average kayak trip last?
- Can you please provide some other activities you participate in or would like to participate in during your kayaking trips?
- Where do you typically stay while on kayaking trips?
- What do you do for food while on your kayaking trips?
- How likely are you to visit the new Charles City kayak park after it opens in spring 2011?

### **Attended Competitions Survey:**

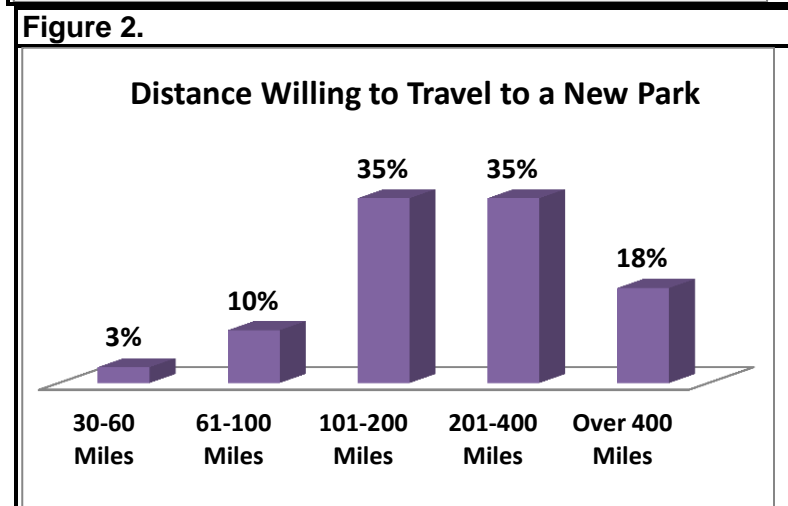
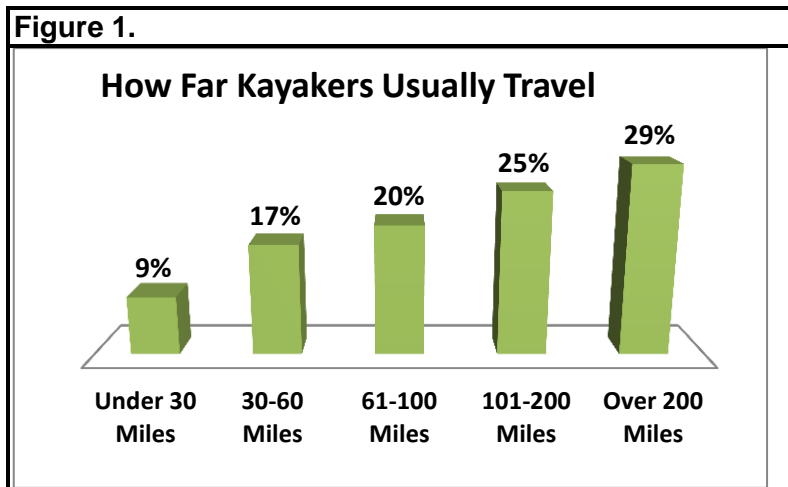
- When and where did you last attend or participate in a kayak competition?
- Did you participate in or just observe the competition?
- What is your gender?
- Which age range best describes you?
- Which events did you participate in or observe?
- Which event did you enjoy the most?
- Who all traveled with you to this competition?
- What are some activities that those who traveled with you chose to do during the days of the competition?
- Was this competition hosted by the city during a festival or by another interest group?
- Where did your party choose to stay during the competition?
- What aspects of the competition and the host town did you enjoy the most?

- If Charles City were to host a freestyle / rodeo kayak competition, how likely would you be to attend either to compete or to watch?

Here are some of the significant findings from our survey. A complete report of our survey's results can be located in the Appendix 3 of this report. For these survey's we received a total of 107 responses, 79 for the general kayaking and 28 in our competitions survey. The first interesting result that we noticed was that nearly 83% of our respondents were male in both of our surveys. We also discovered that the median age of those in kayaking organizations was slightly higher than we had anticipated. Exactly 22 out of the 28 respondents in the competitions survey were over the age of 30 and 12 of those indicated that they were over the age of 50. We found a similar pattern for those in the general kayaking survey as nearly 76% of respondents were 35 years or older, and 33% were over 55 years old (Appendix Figure 1). I will now break down our additional findings based on the survey type.

In the general kayaking survey, we asked kayakers how many years they have been active in the sport and found that 68% have been participating for over five years and an astonishing 23% have been kayaking for over 20 years. When we asked how many times a year they usually go kayaking we found that 74% typically kayak 11 or more times a year. Even more remarkable was the fact that roughly 55% reported kayaked over 20 times a year. This is significant due to the fact that a majority of the respondents reside in the Midwest where typical kayaking season is rather short in duration due to the temperate climate. We also found that 74% of kayakers typically travel over 60 miles to reach their kayaking destination (Figure 1). This finding is very insightful considering that over half of those surveyed kayak over 20 times a

year. With this we can reasonably assume that this demographic is used to traveling a few hours to reach a kayak park and most do not have the luxury of a park in their town. We went ahead and asked participants how far they think they would be comfortable traveling to try a





new kayak park. Roughly 53% said they would travel at least 200 miles or more to go kayaking in a place they have not been before (Figure 2). Below is a table with the estimated mileage between Charles City, IA and the location of the kayak groups that were surveyed (6).

With this we can reasonably assume that many kayakers are used to traveling a few hours to reach a kayak park. We went ahead and asked participants how far they think they would be comfortable traveling to try a new kayak park. Roughly 53% said they would travel at least 200 miles or more to go kayaking in a place they have not been before (Figure 2). Below is a table with the estimated mileage between Charles City, IA and the location of the kayak groups that were surveyed (6).

<b><u>Location of Group Surveyed</u></b>	<b><u>Distance to Charles City, IA (miles)</u></b>
St. Cloud, MN	235
Wausau, WI	277
St. Louis, MO	375
Source: Google Maps, 2011	

Based on the proximity of these groups to Charles City one can deduce that there would be a good chance that kayakers would be willing to travel to the area. We also found that the typical kayak trip lasts between two and four days and those kayakers are most likely to travel with friends, followed by kayak club members, followed by family members. The most common choice for lodging is to camp locally, with staying at hotel or motels a clear second (Appendix Table 1). We also discovered that kayaker's and those who travel with them like to get the full experience of the towns that they travel to and take in everything that the area has to offer. Kayakers seem to really enjoy the natural environment, activities, and restaurants that are unique to an area (Table 1). When explicitly asked the question of whether they are likely to visit Charles City's kayak park or not, 87% said there was at least a fair chance and approximately 54% said they were likely or very likely to visit the park (Appendix Table 2). In our survey intended for individuals who have been to a kayak competition to either participate or observe, we had 17 respondents say they have competed and 8 of the 25 indicated they have only observed competitions. The most common travel companions to these events were identical to the general survey with friends as the most popular, followed by club or group members, and family was third. Once at their destination, camping outdoors was by far the most popular choice when it came to lodging during the competition weekend. We were somewhat surprised to find the age distribution in this group mimicked that of the general kayaker survey. Over half of those surveyed were over the age of 40 and as a whole (Appendix Figure 2).

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Camping	10	21%
Hiking	8	17%
Biking	7	15%
Eating	7	15%
Shopping	5	10%
Nature / Outdoors	4	8%
Drinking	3	6%
Rock Climbing	2	4%
Fishing	2	4%
Totals	48	100%

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Camping	7	19%
Local Activities/Tourism	6	17%
Hiking	5	14%
Watching	4	11%
Shopping	4	11%
Dining/Restaurants	4	11%
Kayak/Competing	3	8%
Bike	3	8%
Totals	36	100%

We found the most common kayaking event to watch or participate in to be sprint races just ahead of slalom then rodeo / freestyle. When asked what the most enjoyable event was our survey population indicated that slalom was their top choice, followed by freestyle / rodeo, and then sprint races (Appendix Figure 3). Another goal for the survey was to find out what local activities and aspects of the kayak town Kayakers and their companions most like to partake in. The top two activities kayaker’s travel partners like to do were camping out and experiencing local activities and tourism (Table 2). As for what aspects the kayak competitors enjoy the most, the top two responses were found to be camaraderie with other kayakers and overall town support and friendliness. Good hospitality seems to be what kayakers value the most (Appendix Table 4). Kayakers and their friends and family want to feel comfortable in their environment. They prefer as little stress as possible so they can enjoy spending time with one another. Lastly, we posed the question of whether those surveyed would attend a freestyle or rodeo kayak competition in Charles City if they were to host one (Appendix Table 3). The overall response was very positive. This is a good indicator that demand for such an event is present and an opportunity exists for the City. While the question specifically asked about attending a freestyle competition, Charles City is also suitable for slalom events which were surveyed as the favorite events to participate in.

### **Kayaking in the News**

The overall popularity of Kayaking has continued to grow over the last few decades and the activity that was once only for outdoor enthusiasts and thrill seekers is now enjoyed by a wide range of people. In a 2008 article, the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review produced a story about how kayaking has become a popular recreational and leisure activity on the Allegheny River near downtown Pittsburgh, PA for people of all ages and backgrounds. Locals enjoy the peace and serenity of the calm water along with the great views of the city that kayaks can offer. Traditionally, locals have used canoes on calm waters in the area, but they are now discovering there are many advantages to kayaks for this activity. Kayaks are relatively less expensive and are easier to maneuver according to residents. The article also stated that kayaking is now tied

for first or comes a close second to canoeing when it comes to the most popular paddle sport in Pittsburgh. One local nonprofit business call Venture Outdoors, who rents kayaks by the hour, said that between 2005 and 2007 the total number of hours kayaks were rented doubled. Going from 2,300 in 2005 to over 5,000 hours in 2007, and they expect this trend to continue (7). On a similar note, an Erie, Pennsylvania paper reported that kayak rental shops in their area experienced a 10% increase in kayak rentals between 2009 and 2010. According to the most recent data from 2008, the Outdoor estimated that there were over 77.4 million kayaking outings during the previous 2 years, up 1.2% nationally. This is a strong indicator that the sport is continuing to gain momentum and increase in overall popularity across a variety of demographic groups (8).

The town of Cascade located in Valley County, Idaho is another example of a successful whitewater park. Recently, Cascade has had a number of setbacks to their local economy and has struggled to rebound. In 2001 the local Boise Cascade Mill closed, and in 2009, the Tamarack Resort closed their doors as well. The County had an unemployment rate of more than 20%. Local leaders held a number of fundraisers and received money from private donors to create a whitewater kayak area in hopes of boosting the economy. Although the park has only been open for a few months, Mayor Dick Carter said that the park has already boosted economic activity. A bed and breakfast along with two kayak and rental shops have opened in the area (9).

Lastly, the town of Yorkville, Illinois just west of Chicago is set to open a new Whitewater Park in Mid-May of 2011. While the town is a little bit larger in population with just over 16,000 residents and closer to a major metropolitan area, their kayak park can still be compared to the one planned for Charles City. The Yorkville's Bicentennial Riverfront Park will be within driving distance for most kayakers in the upper Midwest, and is only about 300 miles from Charles City. This Park will likely compete with the Whitewater Park in Charles City, but will also help get people involved in the sport that otherwise would never try it. Charles City can use the Park in Yorkville as a guide and compare the success and failures of one place to the other. Some particular aspects of the Yorkville Park that Charles City should be aware of would be their lack of parking near the river and that they will not allow grills or open flames for cooking in their park (10). Charles City can use examples such as Yorkville in the future to identify ways to improve the experience of the kayakers who visit.

## Riverfront Park Recommendations

### 1. Host a kick-off event to promote the kayak course, such as a kayak competition or festival

We recommend Charles City host a kayak competition as a kick-off for the opening of the whitewater attraction. A competition would serve as a way to promote the new whitewater park and attract kayakers on a regional (or potentially national) level. A competition could also generate revenue for the City that may be used to construct additional features in the Riverfront Park, while also bolstering local business.

The USA Canoe/Kayak Olympic team competes in 6 kayak events: slalom, freestyle, sprint races, marathon races, polo and wildwater. Of these events, we feel Charles City would be suitable to host slalom, freestyle, and sprint race competitions. Charles City should also include events that would allow novices to participate. These may include unique competition ideas such as “anything that floats,” kayak frisbee or football. Although kayak frisbee and kayak football are original event ideas not seen at other locations, they could become a staple of the Charles City competitions. The events would be similar to a regular game of frisbee or football, except players would be confined to kayaks. Rules should be simple enough that any novice could participate, and could be refined overtime. These types of events would allow the residents to be creative and connect with the waterfront.

### Types of Competitions

#### *Slalom*

Slalom, among the most popular kayak sports, requires kayakers to navigate through a series of gates much like downhill skiing. Hitting the gates or missing the gates results in a time penalty. The color of the gate indicates which direction the kayaker must pass through. The Olympic whitewater slalom event is 300 meters long (about 0.18 miles) with about 18-24 gates. Kayaks are required to weigh at least 9 kilograms, and must be at least 3.5 meters long and 60 centimeters wide (11).

#### *Freestyle*

Freestyle (formerly known as whitewater rodeo) is the competitive form of playboating, which is when a kayaker performs various technical tricks such as spins and flips in whitewater rapids. Playboating requires special types of canoes and kayaks called playboats, which have less volume in the bow and stern allowing the paddler to dip under the water. Freestyle competitions require paddlers to perform as many sanctioned tricks as possible to score points. Judges consider the quality of tricks when allocating points. USA Freestyle Kayaking is the official governing body for freestyle competitions in the US and maintains the rules for sanctioned events, including the National Championship and Team Trials for Olympic qualification (12).

#### *Flatwater Races*

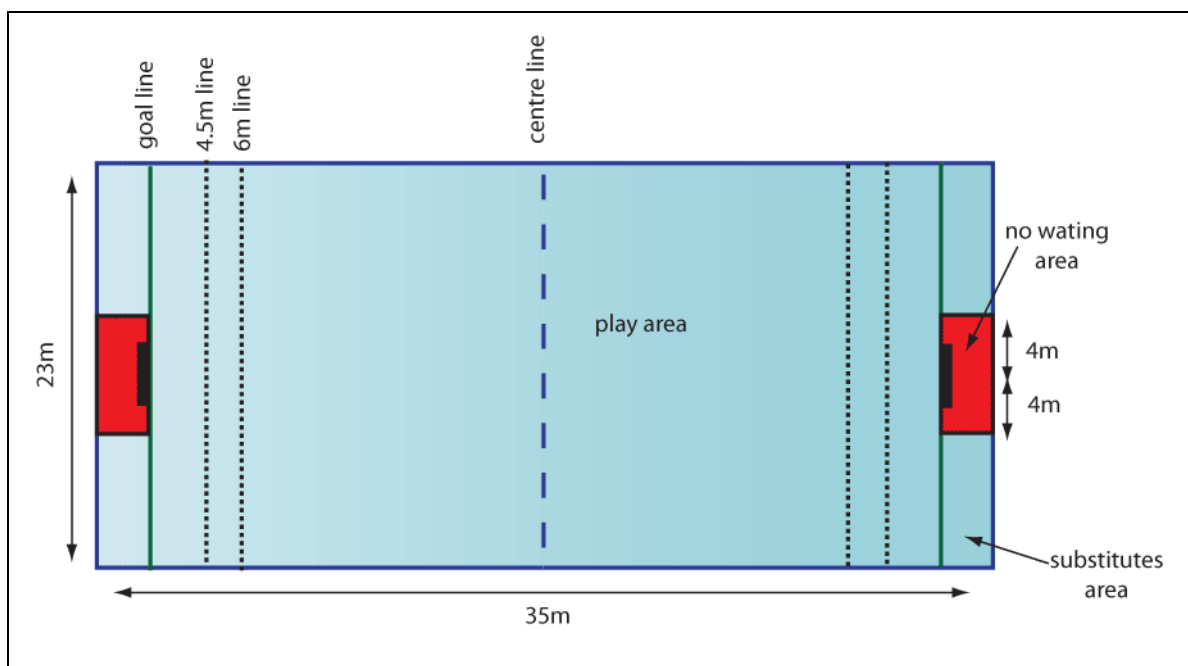
Sprint races typically take place in calm waters (known as flatwater), outside the whitewater course. Races are grouped by the number of paddlers, including single, double, and four-paddler races. Unofficial sprint races vary in length based on the constraints of the river. However, Olympic sprint events include 200 meters, 500 meters, and 1,000 meters (USA Canoe/Kayak).

Like sprint races, marathon races typically are held in flatwater. However, marathons races are over long distances that can last anywhere from 3 hours to several days. During marathon races, paddlers often have to carry their boats over portages to get from one river to another. The 2011 Olympic Marathon Trials included four marathon events, 7 laps, 6 laps, 5 laps, and 4 laps, where each lap was 4.3 kilometers long (11).

### *Kayak (or Canoe) Polo*

Kayak (or canoe) polo is a team sport somewhat like basketball that is played in flatwater. Two teams of five players each compete to get the water polo ball in a net suspended above the water at either end the field. Players can pass the ball using either their hands or their paddles, and the player in possession of the ball can tackled by having his kayak pushed over. The game is normally played in two halves lasting ten minutes each. Special polo boats are usually used, which are constructed to provide extra maneuverability.

A Kayak or Canoe Polo field is normally about 35 meters long (38 yards) by 23 meters wide 25 yards), with a water depth of at least about 90 centimeters (about 3 feet). The picture below shows the dimensions of a typical field (13). However, dimensions vary based on the type of water available. For example, the New York Kayak Polo Tournament is held in a pool that is only 25 yards long (14).



## Wildwater

Wildwater would not be appropriate for the Charles City whitewater course. It is a race across four to five miles of Class III-IV rapids, and is typically confined to areas with natural whitewater rapids (11). This type of race also tends to be more dangerous.

## Characteristics of Existing Competitions

To examine the typical characteristics of kayak competitions and potential viability for Charles City to host an event, we identified 25 locations across United States where competitions are held annually, shown in the table below. While some of these competitions are officially sanctioned by national competition circuits, others simply serve to gather kayakers together for a weekend of fun and friends. National competition sanctioning organizations include USA Freestyle Kayak, American Whitewater, USA Canoe/Kayak, and American Canoe Association (USA Freestyle Kayaking; USA Canoe/Kayak; American Whitewater; American Canoe Association).

National Whitewater Competitions				
Location Name	City	State	Festival <sup>1</sup>	Sanctioned
Boogie Bottoms	Locust Fork	AI	Y	Y
South Fork	Placerville	CA	Y	N
Kern River Valley Area	Kernville	CA	Y	N
Animas River and Santa Rita	Durango	CO	Y	Y
Gunnison	Gunnison	CO	Y	Y
Glenwood Springs	Glenwood Springs	CO	N	N
Salida	Salida	CO	Y	Y
Vail	Vail	CO	N	N
Buena Vista River	Buena Vista	CO	N	Y
Lyons	Lyons	CO	N	Y
Tariffville Gorge	Tariffville	CT	N	Y
Petersburg	Petersburg	IL	N	N
Deerfield River	Charlemont	MA	Y	Y
Great Falls	Potomac	MD	N	Y
Dickerson	Dickerson	MD	N	Y
Kettle River	Kettle River	MN	N	N
Brennans Wave	Missoula	MT	N	N
Truckee River Kayak Park	Reno	NV	Y	N

<sup>1</sup> Paddler Magazine, 2008. List was confirmed and updated through searches for the festival's homepages.

Upper Clackamas River	Estacada	OR	Y	Y
Stoneycreek Conemaugh River	Johnstown	PA	N	N
Ocoee River	Ducktown	TN	Y	Y
Wassau	Wassau	WI	N	Y
Cheat Canyon	Albright	WV	Y	N
Gauley River	Summerville	WV	Y	Y
Green River	Green River	WY	N	Y

Of the competitions we examined, 15 were nationally sanctioned and 10 were associated with festivals that included food vendors, live music, barbeques or pig roasts, carnival games, inflatable attractions, and other family-oriented activities. Competitions generally are scheduled between the months of April and October, and mostly are three-day events held Friday-Sunday. Competitions we examined ranged from small to large. The number of competitors ranged from 30 and 1,000, with 300 to 4,000 attendees. Sanctioned competitions generally had a greater number of competitors and attendees.

Competition courses typically range between Class I and V on the International Scale of River Difficulty (the industry standard scale to measure a whitewater course’s difficulty). However, most are held on Class II-III courses (Class IV and V are reserved for only top athletes because they are considered substantially dangerous).<sup>2</sup>

Competitions typically include a number of events, such as slalom, downriver races, freestyle, and rodeo. Competitions may also include other recreational sporting events such as bike races, rock climbing, disc golfing, and foot races. Competition organizers are also creative with event ideas to stimulate a fun atmosphere. Some unique and inventive competitions include raft races, cardboard boat races, or “anything that floats” races.

Entrance fees and event registration fees vary widely by location. Some locations only charge competitors a flat entrance fee (ranging from \$10 to \$50), while others only charge a per event registration fee (ranging from \$10 to \$25 per event). Yet, some locations charge both an entrance fee and an event registration fee. Locations that host whitewater festivals in conjunction with the competition may also charge the general public a festival admission fee.

Every competition also included a list of national and local sponsors. Local sponsors were typically banks, campgrounds, restaurants, grocery stores, breweries, printing companies, radio stations, law firms, and local kayak or canoe organizations. National sponsors include outfitters, kayak tour and training companies, canoe and kayak gear manufacturers, and national kayak organizations. A list of some national sponsors is provided in the Appendix 4.

Every whitewater competition and festival website included a list of nearby campgrounds, which suggests competitors frequently camp while attending competitions. Only three of the 25 competitions we examined also listed lodging locations. It is interesting to note that the Gauley

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<sup>2</sup> Survey of kayak competition websites and personal interviews with various competitions hosts, Oct. 2010.

Fest in Summerville, West Virginia includes “free camping” to those who pay admission to the festival.

## **2. Promote the kayak course using social media and other Internet resources, and build relationships with kayak communities**

Another recommendation we have for Charles City is to use social media outlets such as Facebook.com, Twitter.com, and Meet-up.com. Online sites such as these are inexpensive and are great places to advertise the kayak park’s opening, in addition to features of the Charles City area. Many people login to these sites almost as regularly as their email accounts. Today’s social media provides the City with a way to reach their target population in an effective and timely manner. The following provides a brief overview of each of the previously mentioned sites and their primary function.

Facebook.com is the most widely utilized social media outlet with the largest variety of users. On this site, you will find over 100 groups with pages dedicated to kayaking. On these pages you can promote and provide updates on the kayak park and also serves as a place where people can ask questions and voice concerns.

On Twitter.com, members can choose to “follow” other members that they are interested in and thus receive real-time updates. For Charles City, any updates regarding local news, alerts, or other information would be relevant and beneficial. In order to get followers, Charles City must actively recruit people to follow them and be consistent with regular updates.

Meet-up.com serves as a place where people with similar interests can come together and plan events and activities. This would be a great place to refer people to who are looking to make a trip to Charles City and would like another kayak enthusiast to travel with.

We also suggest that the City develop good relationships with local schools, University recreation departments, and kayaking or outdoors organizations. With Charles City being the only kayak park in the state of Iowa, there is a tremendous opportunity to attract kayakers who live in the State. Recreational departments of colleges and universities often plan trips to provide students with outdoor recreational opportunities. Proactively contact these organizations, will not only serve to publicize the new park, it may also encourage interest among recreational department who do not typically organize recreational trips. The University of Iowa Recreational Services Department had already expressed interest in sponsoring a group trip. Local businesses may also appreciate the extra customers, and may be willing to provide group discounts as a way to attract schools and groups. The goal, of course, is to ensure an enjoyable experience so people return and tell their friends.

## **3. Create a larger trail network for better hiking and biking.**

Our surveys indicated kayakers prefer locations with adequate trails for hiking and biking. However, the Riverfront Trail, which is directly accessible from the Riverfront Park, is only about one mile. This trail length is insufficient for anything more than a short walk. Charles City’s existing Charley Western Trail, which circles the city, is just over 3.5 miles but has no direct



connection to the Riverfront Park. We recommend creating a connection from the western edge of the Charley Western Trail to the Riverfront Trail.

The graphic below shows the potential location for connecting the two trail systems. Floyd County property records indicate there are only three property owners who own land in the ¼ mile between the trail heads. The City might be able to pursue acquisition of the properties or negotiate an easement.

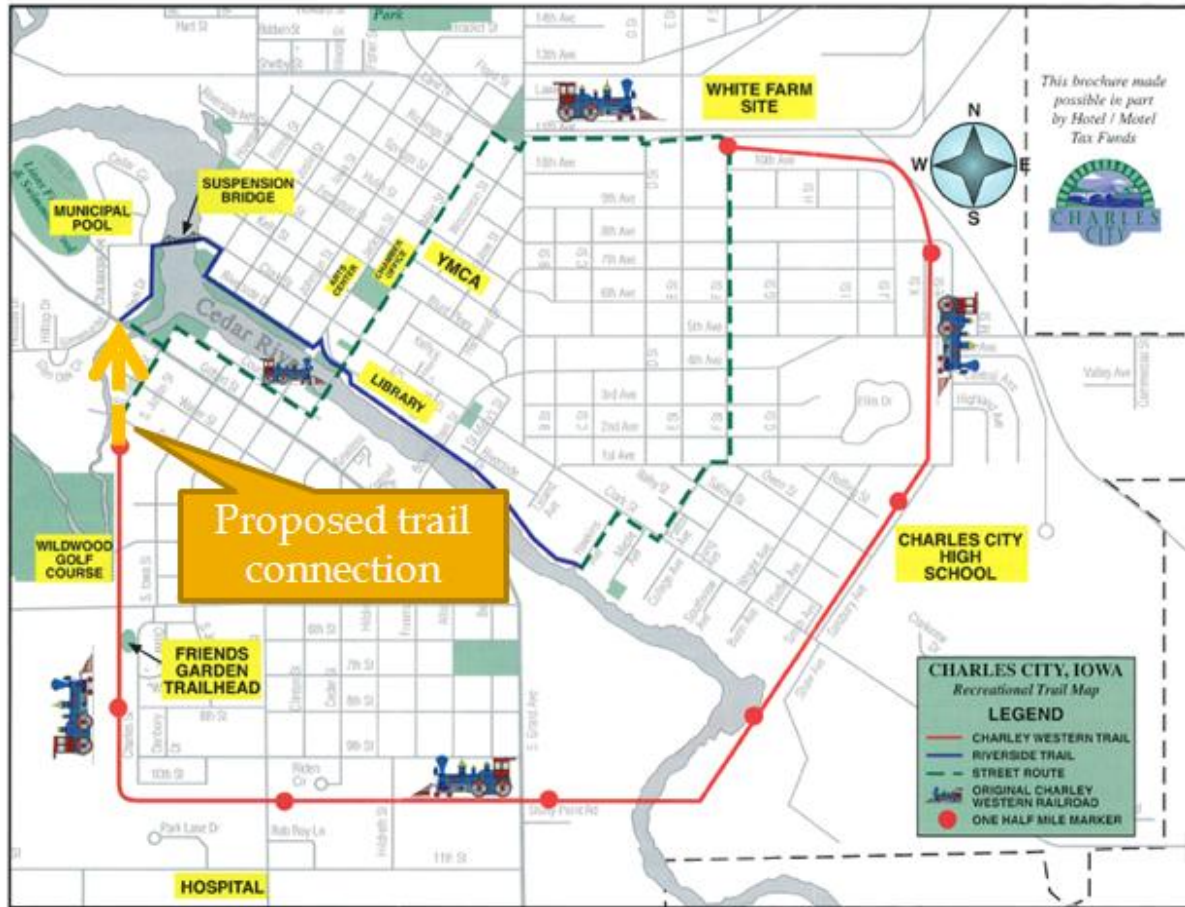


Photo Source: (15)

Unfortunately, the proposed western connection appears to be the only opportunity to connect the two trails and create one continuous trail network that would not requiring hikers to use public sidewalk. Therefore, a partnership with existing owners of those properties would be essential and could prove challenging. If the City is successfully able to connect the two trail systems, it would create about five linear miles of trail which could feasibly serve hikers and bikers. Creating a longer continuous trail network would better meet the needs and expectations of kayak visitors.

#### **4. Promote off-season uses to ensure year-round interest in the park.**

To ensure park is utilized year-round, we recommend that Charles City look to enhance the winter trails trials system. These include trails for snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing. In addition, Charles City should use the park as a community gathering place by hosting or sponsoring events that engage Charles City area residents.

##### *Snowmobiling*

We recommend creating and maintaining a snowmobile trail that would utilize the existing trail system around the Riverfront Park. Participants of the public input session held on March 29, 2011, identified snowmobiling as a top choice for winter park activities and we found similar kayak parks across the country often include groomed snowmobile trails. Charles City has had trails in the past; our recommendation is for them to continue the use of these trails. The implementation and maintenance of a snowmobile trail is not something that should be taken as a light task, as several factors and issues figure into it. The Iowa DOT does provide technical assistance for the maintenance and operation of trails, but the local community is in charge of the operation. Discussed below are some of the basic requirements and trail recommendations that come from the Iowa Department of Transportation's Iowa Trails 2000 Guidebook (16).

For one-way paths, the DOT lists a "desirable" minimum groomed trail surface of 8 feet for one-way and 10 feet for two-way trails. In addition trails should have a 2 foot clear zone on either side. The groomed trail, for obvious safety reasons, must be clear of all stumps, branches, rocks, or other obstacles. Beyond the width requirements on the ground, there should also be a minimum of a 10 foot clearance above the trail, clear of trees and branches.

The DOT suggests that in order to maximize trail potential that trails should be located in areas, when possible, that retain snow well. These include northern facing slopes, tree lines, woodlands, and valleys. Proper signage, run through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, will also be needed. Another important scenario is the impact it will have on the immediate area. With the riverfront park being located in an urban surrounding, it is important to consider noise and how that could affect residents and businesses surrounding the park. We recommend Charles City approach these issues based on their previous experience with snowmobile trails in the past. However, one solution could be to limit the use of the trails to daytime hours. Because the trails are in an urban setting, daytime noise would likely be undistinguishable from regular vehicular traffic.

Based off of previous recreational trail maps (17) we recommend the city use the Charley Western trail as a groomed snowmobile course. The Riverside Trail is another area we would recommend, as long the area is not already designated for snowshoeing or cross country skiing- more details on this are to follow. These would be ideal locations if the trails meet the other recommended characteristics as outlined by the DOT.

Beyond the requirements and suggestions for running a well preserved trail, there are initial startup and other continuous costs. To create and maintain a groomed trail, a specialized grooming machine would need to be used. The DOT also estimates the approximate cost for a 10 foot wide trail to run above \$10,000 per mile for initial construction. These cost should be minimal considering Charles City has used the recommended route in years past for snowmobile trails. Before opening a trail, other considerations such as permitted use, policing, liability, advertisement, and other factors must also be considered. Again, we recommend Charles City approach these issues based on their previous experience with snowmobile trails.

One important aspect of the continued recommended trail use is the crossing of the Cedar River during the route of the trail. The DOT requires that if any part of the trail includes going over frozen water, a bridge must be provided. To address this concern, the snowmobiling could be limited to either the north or south side the river.

In order to maintain a safe and fun trail, maintenance and preparation before the winter months and continual upkeep throughout the snowmobile season is needed. Winter weather and use of the trail cause wear and tear on the trail. Preseason preparation includes tasks such as: snow grooming and moving, placing signage, path clearing, managing surrounding vegetation, repairing any damages that have occurred, and other necessary tasks. It is common for local communities to enter into partnerships with both private and non-profit groups in the area for trail operations and maintenance. Reaching out to local snowmobile or trail clubs would be a good way to judge interest and possibly partnering with groups to take on this project with.

As noted earlier, these requirements, suggestions, and estimates come from the Iowa Department of Transportation's Iowa Trails 2000 Guidebook. For a more detailed list of requirements, suggestions, and additional information please refer to the bibliography to find out where the information from this guidebook can be accessed.

The average length of a snowmobile in Iowa State parks is approximately 8.7 miles; without considering the outlier lengths of one park. However, several trails are less than this, with some only close to a mile in length. The four closest state parks to Charles City, include: Clear Lake State Park, Beeds Lake State Park, McIntosh Woods State Park, and George Wyth Memorial State park; these all fall within 35-45 miles of the city. Beeds Lake and McIntosh have course lengths of 2 and 1 mile, respectively. Clear Lake and George Wyth do not have snowmobile trails (18). We recommend the use of the Charley Western Trail as it provides appropriate length expectations based on these other trails.

### *Cross Country Skiing*

We also recommend Charles City utilize its surrounding landscape by providing a groomed course for cross country skiing. Cross country skiing is usually done on groomed trails; which requires a grooming attachment that can be pulled behind a snowmobile. Similar to snowmobile trails, cross country skiing trails must also be maintained and managed in both winter and other months to ensure their safety from potential obstacles in the path. These can include items like rocks, logs, or tree roots (19).

Some of the more popular places for ski trails include: hiking/walking trails, shorelines, service roads, fields, and old railroad grades. Ideally, trails should be wide with gentle curves and a hilly terrain (19). Fortunately, the city's immediate surrounding area includes many of these areas. We recommend converting the original Charley Western Railroad, use the shore along the river, or the nearby golf course. An assessment of the actual landscape and topography of the riverfront park and surrounding area will need to be made to see if they would be viable options.

Iowa state parks have close to 600 miles of cross country skiing trails in nearly 50 locations. Except for five, much larger outlier tracks, the average length of a course is close to 7 miles. The four state parks closest to Charles City do have cross country trails; George Wyth with 11 miles, Beeds Lake with 4 miles, and Clear Lake and McIntosh both with 1 mile trails (18).

While open state park land has a greater opportunity for trails, we recommend Charles City, if topography allows, create a two-way trail along the Charley Western trail starting at the White Farm site traveling along the southwest part of the city until it reaches Southern Illinois Street. This would provide 7 miles of trail which is similar to the typical length of cross country skiing trails in Iowa. We recommend a two-way trail based off the typical course lengths found on state trails and this course would allow for skiers to ski back to where they started.

Similar to snowmobiling, crossing of the Cedar River is required for this recommended course. If, the bridge is not wide enough to be safely used by both snowmobilers and cross country skiers, we recommend the trail start the path back towards the White Farm Site. This would still allow for a 3-mile course which would still be comparable to other state trails, but on the shorter end.

If these recommendations are not logistically possible, we recommend designating the Riverside Trail for a cross country skiing trail. If this trail is utilized for cross country skiing, we recommend that snowmobiles not be allowed in this area. It is limited in distance, but is located on a shoreline which is a popular area for these trails. An examination of the actual topography will still have to be made to see if this is feasible.

Due to obvious safety and use issues, it is absolutely vital to have clearly marked and separated trails for cross country skiing use and snowmobiling.

### *Snowshoeing*

Snowshoeing is a popular activity that is often associated with cross country skiing. Snowshoeing is popular because there is a small start up cost and does not necessarily require the same physical abilities as cross country skiing. It is also considered easy to learn and has been called the fastest growing winter sport in the world (20).

The city should sponsor events to foster and encourage snowshoeing in the park area and the recommended cross country skiing trail. For example, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, or a private vendor, rent snowshoes at many of their state parks. The department also sponsors activities for snowshoes, including: moonlight hikes, candlelit walks, and hikes

that follow GPS tracking (21). We recommend the city hold sponsored dates, workshops, or competitions to help give experience and knowledge to beginners and spark interest.

Snowshoers often create their own trails or use areas specifically designated for snowshoeing. Trails are often based off existing hiking trails and can range greatly in terms of difficulty. (Redfeather Snowshoes). We recommend there be a designated snowshoeing area either at the public golf course or in the riverfront park area where the current Riverside Trail is. These areas provide open, yet complex enough variation in terrain, to make the experience enjoyable. We also recommend that snowshoers be allowed to share and use the cross country skiing trail. Snowshoeing typically requires a minimum of four inches of snow (22).

### *Other Uses*

We recommend that the City look with greater detail into holding ice/snow sculpting events or contests during the winter months. This would serve as an opportunity to engage the community and allow the public to see the value and use of this type of park during all seasons of the year. Sculpting and contest activities were brought up during the public meeting on March 29, 2011, during the small group work session of the meeting. Multiple groups expressed snow or ice sculpting, or community events as one of their top interests for off-season uses of the park. These activities have the potential not just to be used and enjoyed by Charles City residents, but attract outsiders to come to the city to enjoy these activities.

Sledding and tubing are other possible winter activities that citizens could be interested in using the park for during the winter. Some cities hold events that include city sponsored sledding, snowman building contests, or other winter activities to engage and bring the community together. We recommend Charles City hold an event or events similar to these.

### **5. Host a naming and logo competition.**

It is important for Charles City to give the park a unique identity as a way to distinguish it from other kayak parks. Currently the City is referring to the park as the “Riverfront Park.” However, *riverfront* is commonly used through Iowa and the Midwest. (Riverfront Crossing in Iowa City, Riverfront Trails in Davenport, Riverfront Stadium in Waterloo, to name a few.) In fact, the City of Yorkville, Illinois is currently developing a whitewater park that is named the Bicentennial Riverfront Park.

We feel it is important to create an identity for the Charles City park that would make it easily distinguishable from the other *riverfront* locations and evokes a clear message regarding Charles City’s character and lure. During the March 29, 2011 public meeting, participants suggested engaging the Charles City community by holding a naming and logo competition. We feel this is a great solution because it would challenge the community to create brand based on their vision of the City.

We also recommend the winning name and logo would be displayed at the park as an entry sign. This would serve as a reward to the winner, while also help identify the park for visitors. It would also create visual interest that would hopefully leave a lasting impression.

## **Downtown Business Development**

### **Summary of Business Recommendations**

Charles City is in position to grow its downtown. It has many of the amenities that kayakers are looking for but has room to grow in key sectors. Charles City residents and kayakers want to see a kayak outfitter, full service restaurants, and local retail. The city should work with local lodging to ensure visitors are well oriented with the city and what it has to offer. We also recommend that the city clearly defines where long term parking is located. They should also inform businesses of the abundant amount of parking within a short walking distance. When more businesses want to locate in Charles City it will be crucial for the city to promote retail and other industries locate on the bottom floors. Community Development Block Grants can be applied for to help renovate buildings for more useable space. These funds may also be used to help develop along the south side of the river and for the empty lot on Clark and Main Street. While the town will be able to accommodate moderate growth at first in the long run it will be appropriate to address these issues to ensure a thriving economy that meets the needs of both town visitors and residents.

### **Current State**

The Charles City business community is sitting in a position to change and expand their businesses. Currently there is a mix of old businesses and new. Over 50% of businesses are over 20 years old and another 25% are between 5-20 years old. However 16% of businesses are less than five years old (23). With a new population of tourists expected to visit there is a great opportunity for new businesses to enter the downtown.

The percentage of property owners is only about two percent higher than renters at 51% of the market. There is a wide variety of businesses represented in Charles City. The retail and service industry sit at about 25% of the market each. This is followed up by professional/offices at 20% and finance/banking at six and a half percent of the market. However food and beverage is lacking making up only six and half percent of the area businesses. Most of the businesses are locally owned and operated (23).

Of the businesses surveyed 97.9% said their primary customer base is Charles City residents. It is important to learn about the average Charles City citizen and their satisfaction of the downtown business district.

### **Average Charles City Citizen**

The median household income for Charles City in 2010 was \$43,083 (24). In 2000, the median income household income was \$30,568 (25). Most of the population, about 53%, was employed in the service industry. This was followed by manufacturing at 15% and retail trade with about 10.2% (23). This is consistent with what types of businesses dominate the Charles City's

downtown. The state is similar with manufacturing totaling to about 14%, retail trade at roughly 12%, and the service industry at about 49% (26).

## Retail Gap

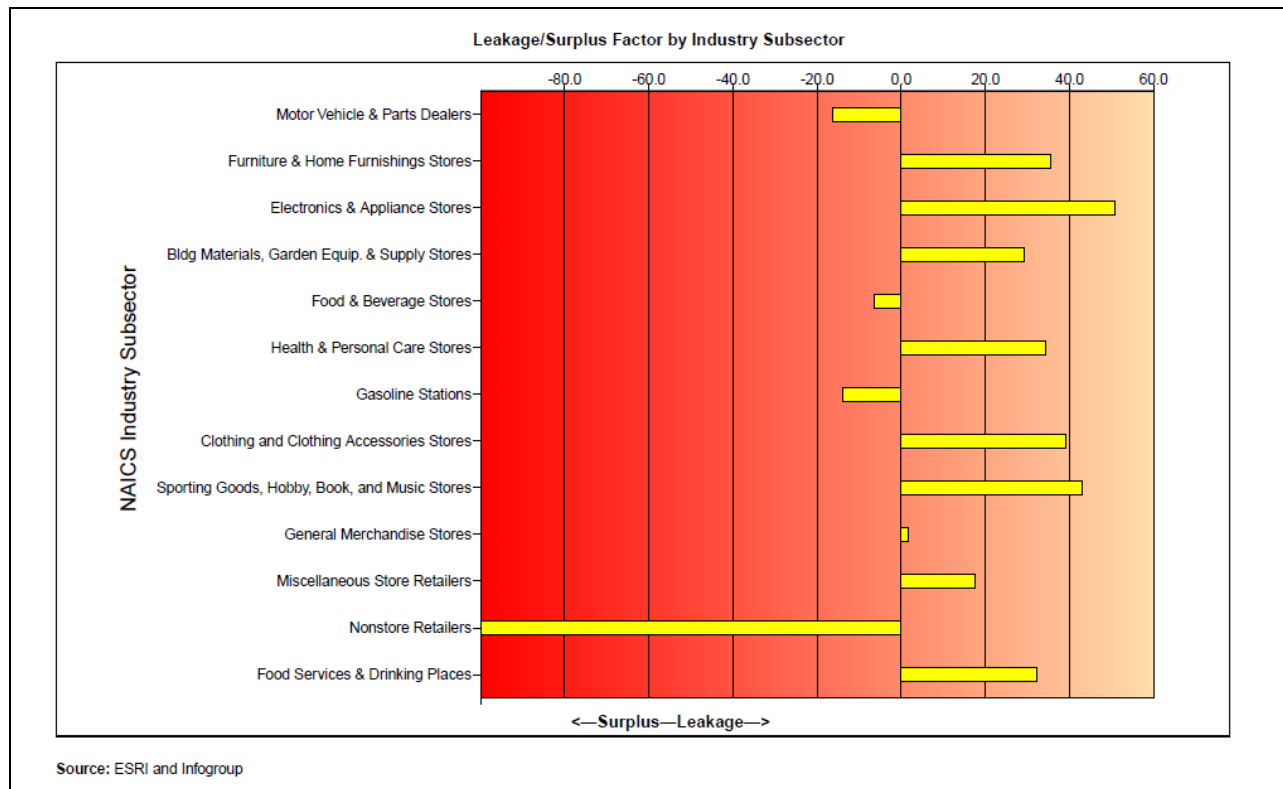
Charles City's economy has room to grow. Using ESRI's Retail Market Place Profile, we have identified certain industries that are underrepresented in the area. ESRI uses North American Industrial Classification System, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and US Census Data from 2007 to create retail potential and retail sales. Within a 10 minute drive-time of downtown, several industries currently are under-producing while others are attracting business from a large area. The three industries that bring in the most money include food and beverage stores at \$17 million, motor vehicle & parts dealers at \$23.3 million, gasoline stations at \$20.5 million (24).

Retail businesses that bring in outside business to Charles City are scarce. The industries that supply everyday needs such as food and gas perform the best. There is little in way of spending of disposable income in Charles City. Some other businesses that bring outside dollars into Charles City include general merchandise stores and direct selling establishments. These are projected to have zero demand from the local economy but have some supply. This would suggest that most of these establishments business is from outside the 10 minute driving radius.

Miscellaneous store retailers fall short of the city's retail potential. Although they have a small market potential with an estimated \$1 million in sales a year they have a gap of over \$300,000. These industries include florists, office supply, merchandise stores, and other miscellaneous stores. This is of interest because these are goods that people most likely will not travel long distances to purchase.

Restaurants and bars are another area that Charles City is underperforming. As a whole, there is a demand of \$11,381,770 and a supply of only \$5,843,270. Most of that supply is being provided by the limited service eating places reaching \$3,833,611 in sales. This would suggest that people eat more at fast food restaurants because there is a lack of full service restaurants. Full services restaurants currently make up only about 18% of its potential, and they currently only bring in \$1.6 million a year of a potential of about \$9 million. There is also some potential for special food services and drinking places (alcoholic beverages). While other industries are lacking because of other options that are within driving distance, it is important to remember that people do not travel long distances to obtain food which is probably why limited service industries is much higher than expected. Given the lack of options, people who would like to eat out are forced to eat at the fast food alternatives.

The figure on the following page shows the leakage of sectors in Charles City for a travel distance of 10 minutes. If an industry has leakage it means sales are much lower than potential. This suggests people are filling in that gap by traveling to locations outside Charles City.

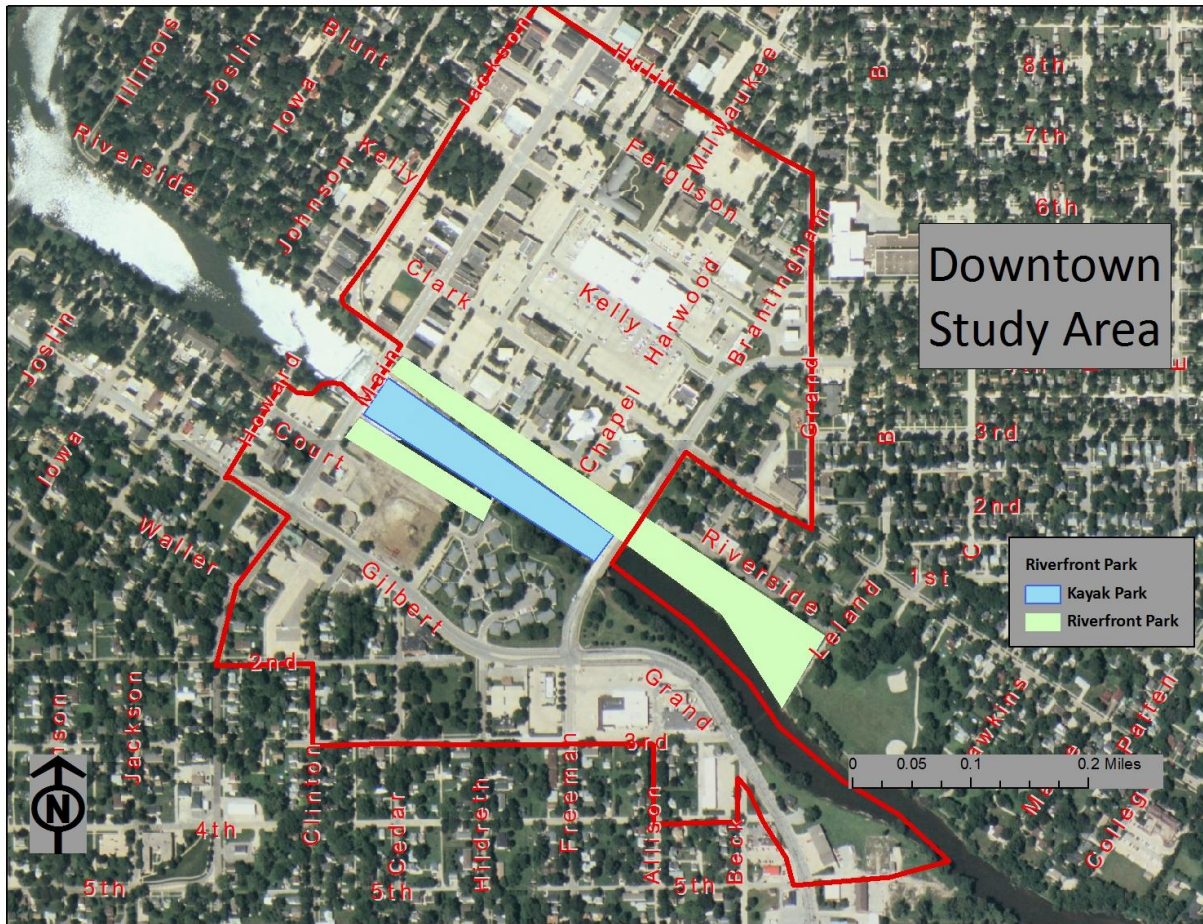


There are also industries that have leakages that are less concerning. These include furniture and home furnishings, clothing and accessories, sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores, general merchandise stores, and non-store retailers. Given Charles City’s population size and proximity to larger metropolitan regions such as the Waterloo and Cedar Falls, this would be expected. People are willing to drive the roughly 45 minutes to a larger area that provides them with many options for a full day of shopping. Charles City does not currently have the population to sustain a large retail sector. We are optimistic this will change with increased demand and population from tourists. The kayak park will bring in people from all over the region, increasing the foot traffic downtown. While it may be overly speculative to expect a rush of new retail, certain niche industries that are already in demand have room to expand. We will discuss in the following sections what Charles City citizens want from their downtown and what Kayakers will expect.

### What Do Charles City Citizens Want?

During our public input session held on March 29th, 2011 we asked participants what businesses the public wanted to see in Charles City’s downtown. The top answer was an outdoor outfitter where they, along with tourists, could find gear for hunting, fishing, kayaking, and other outdoor activities. The second most reported answer was retail in general. We defined downtown as the area with Gilbert street, Jackson Street, Hulin Street, N. Grand Avenue, and 200th Avenue. This can be seen more clearly in the map below. The responses we received from the residents of Charles City were rather promising. Given the data we had obtained retail is one industry that can be expected to grow.





In the study area only 20 of over 100 businesses are retail based operations. When asked “If a visitor asked you what one thing they should see or do while in Charles City, it would be...?” several groups answered local shopping. Some shops that were specifically mentioned include Otto’s Oasis, RC on Main, Aroma’s Coffee Bar, and Natural Beauty. They also expressed pride in the movie theater and various clothing stores that are unique to their town. The citizens clearly enjoy the shops and businesses that currently are downtown but would like to see a greater quantity of them with more variety. With more variety brings more people and increased foot traffic. Shoppers will naturally gravitate to this area to meet their retail needs. More impulse shopping occurs with more foot traffic given ground floor retail options. Over time, people will become more familiar with what shops are downtown and what each of them offers for sale to the public.

The public also indicated they wanted to see more restaurants downtown. The types of establishments that citizens identified included sushi, deli, and a bar/brewery/winery. While some clearly wanted a lunch place such as a deli an overwhelming response was for more restaurants to add to the nightlife. It is worth noting that only 8% of the businesses in the downtown study area were food related.

Many of the breakout groups during our public meeting wanted to see a new bar open downtown. Currently there are a couple bars in Charles City including the Tori's Tavern and Pub on the Cedar both along the river. These are perfectly situated for kayakers and riverfront park users to visit. Something else that residents expressed interest in was more entertainment at the bars. This could include live music, open mic. nights, art showings, etc. As seen from our kayaker survey, kayakers really like to see what the towns are all about. Restaurants and bars are perfect venues for citizens and tourists to intermingle.

### **Economic Impact of Kayak Parks in other Communities**

To give us further insight into kayak tourism opportunities we examined 20 cities that have kayak parks that were similar to Charles City. The cities were primarily chosen due to their respective population size, although three parks were examined in the Midwest for a locational comparison despite a strong contrast in population. Of the cities included in the study, eight were in Colorado. While we feel these locations do provide some insight into business development around kayak parks, we understand the potential relationship to Charles is somewhat limited because all of the Colorado locations are home to skiing facilities. These areas are deeply rooted in sports-based tourism and attract recreational tourists year round. Both Charles City residents and kayakers in general want locally owned restaurants, shopping, a kayak outfitter, and variety in lodging opportunities, especially outdoor camping.

In another effort to get a better grasp on how the new kayak park will impact Charles City we reached out to those other communities that have a kayak park within their city. To accomplish this, our team compiled a list of cities with kayak parks and from there we contacted city officials via email explaining who we are and asked if they would answer a short list of questions for us. In total we had three communities provide us with answers, Reno, Nevada, South Bend, Indiana, and Missoula, Montana. The questions we asked each city were the following:

- What year was your kayak park constructed and was your local community responsive and supportive of the project? Are they supportive of the park and those who kayak today?
- After construction, was there any influx of new businesses to the area? Were they kayak related in any way?
- Based on local economic data and/or your opinion, did the kayak park boost local tourism significantly? Does your town host any kayak competitions throughout the year?
- Would you consider your kayak park to be an overall success? Was it cost effective? Do you feel it is now part of your community's identity?
- Is there any data available that would reflect the impact of the kayak park on the local economy?

With regards to the previous list of questions, here is a summary of what we found from those cities that responded to our inquiry.

### *Reno, Nevada*

The construction of the Truckee River Whitewater Park in Reno was completed in May of 2004 at a total cost of approximately \$1.5 Million dollars. Some of the park's features include 11 drop pools, 11,000 tons of rocks, and has been considered by many to be the most sophisticated whitewater park in the country. This park is featured as an Olympic Whitewater training venue, slalom course, and great for family outings (Wallish, 2011).

The Truckee River Whitewater Park is just one of many projects that the City of Reno and the Reno Redevelopment Agency has done to transform the downtown area over the past decade. This region of the United States has been well known for the abundance of outdoor activities it offers therefore the Reno area already had plenty of retail stores and outfitters in the vicinity of the river to meet the needs of kayakers (Wallish, 2011). However, it was stated that the Whitewater Park is a great compliment to the Reno's identity as a hub for outdoor sports and activities and helps support and advance that local tourism sector. The Park hosts several kayaking competitions each year and has melded into part of the towns identity. Reno was recently recognized as one of the Best Places to Live 2010 in the United States by Men's Journal Magazine (Best Place to Live 2010, 2010).

### *Missoula, Montana*

A local kayak group in Missoula, Montana began planning Brennan's Wave kayak park back in 1996. It took ten years of diligent planning efforts before construction began in 2006 and it was soon open to the public (Kinsey, 2011). This whitewater park added an addition segment of tourism to the town and local economy. Prior to the construction of Brennan's Wave, Missoula served as a popular stop for boaters who are traveling through on the local network of rivers. The park's construction attracted kayakers to the city and many boaters will stop and kayak for a while when passing through Missoula. A local boating shop called Strongwater hosts an annual four event series and last year Strongwater with the Missoula Downtown Association Co-hosted one of the US Freestyle Kayak Championship events. The whitewater project cost just over \$300,000 and was funded through the Missoula Redevelopment Agency along with donations from local businesses and citizens. The city views this investment as a success as kayakers are very pleased with the final product. The city of Missoula is currently in the beginning phases of adding another whitewater area just downstream of Brennan's Wave.

### *South Bend, IN*

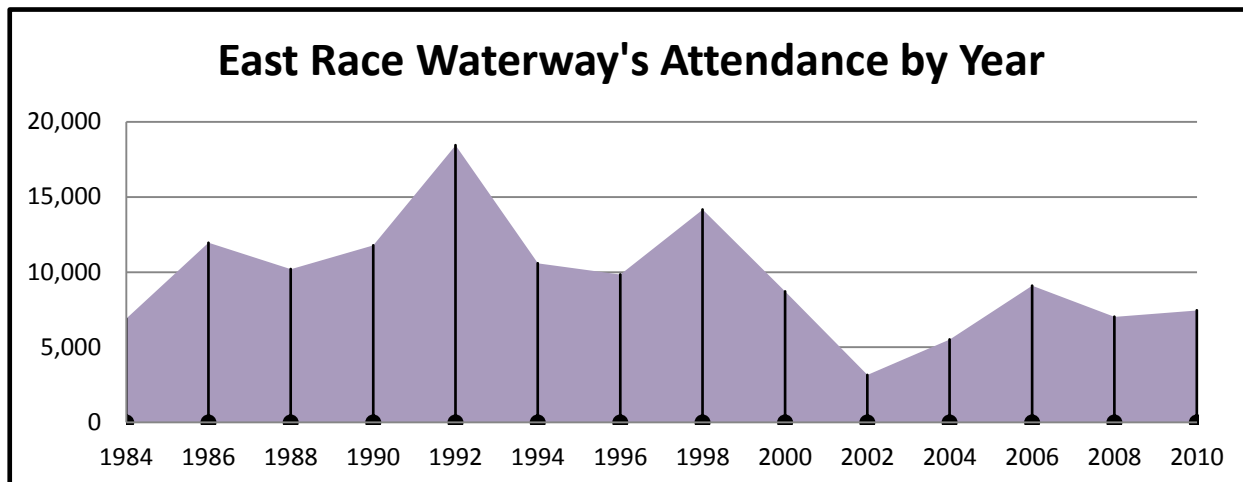
The original East Race Waterway was completed in 1844 in an effort to provide water power to the factories that line the areas banks. Once these factories switched to other sources for power the waterway became obsolete and was soon filled in. The 1960's were very hard on the City of South Bend as Studebaker, the nation's fourth largest automobile manufacturer, closed its doors in the community. The City was slowly dying and needed a jolt of new energy. So in 1972, Don Sporleder, a professor of architecture at the University of Notre Dame, proposed the idea of a whitewater course (Falda, 2002). It took a few years but in the early 1980's, the city of South Bend decided to invest just over \$4.5 Million dollars into the rehabilitation of the waterway and make it into a recreational waterway featuring artificial whitewater rapids (Society, 1992).

The East Race Waterway runs 1,900 feet (approximately .36 miles) and was engineered by Lawson & Fisher Associates, a local engineering firm. The waterway runs at a 2 out of 5 whitewater scale rating and normally flows at a rate of 450-500 cubic feet per second (Recreation Dept, 2011). The Whitewater Park in South Bend took two years to construct and opened to the public in 1984. The East Race Waterway was the first artificial urban whitewater course in North America and only the second one in the entire world. The total cost of the project was approximately \$5 million dollars and was paid for by \$4 million in local bonds and a \$1 million dollar grant (Recreation Dept, 2011).

South Bend did not experience an influx of new retail business related to kayaking but does report an increase in revenue at existing local restaurants and shops in the vicinity of the East Race Waterway. The town does not host any formal kayaking competitions but does participate and host other annual and periodic events at East Race. The waterway area has a stage for concerts which was opened in 1998 and has had over 85,000 people in attendance combined since that time. The local fire department hosts a "River Rescue School" where they train other fire departments in various water safety techniques. Also, East Race serves as a checkpoint annually for "Urban Adventure", a marathon event with a number of different activities and an obstacle course. A South Bend representative also noted that the waterway has hosted Olympic Trials in the past. (Price, 2011).

Overall, the Whitewater Park in South Bend was a success. It has brought outside tourism to South Bend for reasons other than the University of Notre Dame and has become part of this communities identity (Price, 2011). Listed below are a number of facts about the East Race Waterway as well as a chart of attendance that was published by the South Bend Parks & Recreation Department.

- With the completion of the east end of the river walk in 2011 connecting south bend to Mishawaka, we will have 13 miles of walkway. The east race is part of this walkway
- South Bends has hosted 18 kayak races that averaged 500 people (this includes spectators and racers). Included in these races were 4 U.S. Olympic regional team and U.S. Junior Olympic team trials & races which drew numerous international competitors.
- The East Race is generating more than \$68 million dollars in economic development, and the future looks bright as it continues to be a catalyst drawing private investment.
- It is estimated that 50% percent of rafters and kayakers do not reside in St. Joseph County where South Bend is located.
- In a customer satisfaction survey, the East Race waterway scored as high as those events held at The University of Notre Dame.
- In 2003 90% percent of all the obstacles in the Race were resurfaced and a \$90,000 dollar donated stage was installed at Seitz Park for the summer concert series.
- Currently there are 7 historical signs installed along the East Race and there is a plan to add at least 4 more.
- The East Race was featured on a "Weekend Warriors" segment for NBC's *Today Show* that aired in December of 2006.



## Downtown Business Recommendations

### Industry Recommendations

Key industries will be affected by the whitewater park. We examined what kayakers, what Charles City Wants, and other kayak towns. Trends were spotted and recommendations for industries were developed.

#### 1. Recruit an Outfitter / Kayak Tourism Business

In order to meet the needs of local citizens as well as the out of town kayakers and tourists we suggest that Charles City recruit a local Outdoors Outfitter to the area to meet the needs associated with the Kayak Park. Currently there is no kayak outfitter located in Charles City. There are several businesses interested in offering kayak rentals. In eight of the comparison cities there was no outfitter or sporting goods stores. However, only four of the locations didn't have any business providing rentals or classes provided privately or publicly.

Charles City must create an outlet where people can rent kayaks to use in the park. This service could be provided by the local outfitter or by an entirely separate business entity. Many businesses have expressed interest in possibly providing this service. It is crucial because many people in the immediate area probably do not have boats suitable for whitewater kayaking, and therefore will need to rent. On this note, we recommend that the rental business offer renting inflatable boats. Inflatable kayaks are durable, light weight, and can be easily stored.

An outfitter can also act as a hub for tourists. When new to the town kayakers can visit the outfitter to learn about the characteristics of the play area and purchase equipment. Citizens and new comers can learn more about kayaking from an outfitter who provides lessons. As discussed earlier with proper training many people can enjoy the sport of kayaking.

As of 2010, Charles City had a retail potential of over half a million dollars for sporting goods, hobby, and music stores. There is a gap of about \$300,000. An outfitter will survive in the

downtown given this demand and the increase demand from residents and other new comers to the sport. Below is a list of outfitters that are near Charles City. This list can help guide recruitment for a Charles City outfitter.

<b>Kayak Rentals/Guided Tours near Charles City</b>	
Fever River Outfitters	Galena, IL
Captain’s Cove Motel	Prairie Du Chien , WI
WI River Outing	Sauk City, WI & Boscobel, WI
Wisconsin Canoe Company	Madison, WI
Mr. Ducks Canoe Rental	Ontario, WI
Lake Delton Water Sports	Lake Delton, WI
Supreme Water Sports	Middleton, WI
Rutabaga	Monona, WI
Geneva Kayak Center	Yorkville, IL
*Source: Paddleaway.com	

**2. Provide onsite rental of inflatable kayaks, canoes, and inner tubes**

If the City cannot recruit a kayak outfitter before the park opens the City should provide rentals of inflatable boats. They are lightweight, durable, and easier to use than traditional fiberglass or polyethylene boats. This would allow more people to use the equipment. The City should provide the boats through onsite dispensers, so boats are easily accessible. It also makes minimizes the City’s administrative oversight of the rental initiative. The dispensers would allow renters to check out a key with administrative officials and then retrieve the boat from the onsite dispenser. Inflatable kayaks also would not require any additional equipment. Our research indicates onsite rental dispensers are typically custom fabricated. Often, the dispensers are custom fabricated by local youth groups such as boy scouts.

**3. Industry Recommendations**

*Hotel*

When comparing lodging, we took the Colorado locations separately as we assumed their demand would be higher because of year-long tourist attractions. In Colorado we saw a range from no lodging businesses to as much as 20 locations, with an average of about 9 locations. However, the 12 comparison cities outside of Colorado had a range of from no lodging businesses to as much as 10 locations, with an average of between 4 and 5 locations. Charles City currently has several locations for lodging. The 2 national hotel chains include Super 8 and

Sleep Inn & Suites, which are located within a mile and a half from the riverfront development. There is also locally owned options such as the Red Cedar Lodge, Hartwood Inn, Best Budget Inn, and Hometown Inn. If the City chooses to host a competition, additional lodging needs and alternatives would need examined.

### *Camping*

Another trend seen in our comparison cities was the availability of camping. Our kayaker survey showed an overwhelming demand for camping when kayaking. Charles City has camping at the R Campground which is located just to the southeast of downtown Charles City on the Cedar River and will offer convenient access to the new park. There are also several additional camp opportunities outside Charles City, but within a reasonable travel distance. The Floyd County Conservation Board manages 25 parks. Camping is provided at Ackley Creek Park (37 electrical sites, 10 primitive sites, and showers/restrooms), Gates Bridge Access (6 primitive sites, w/ river access), and the West Idlewild Campground (primitive sites, w/ river access) (27). While these are not immediately in the city, they are within a 15 mile distance and could feasibly be used by kayak tourists. Partnering with the conservation board to provide promotional material for the kayak park would be beneficial.

### *Restaurants and Bars*

From our survey we found that kayakers really enjoy local restaurants. This is consistent with what we witnessed in the comparison cities. Of the 20 locations only one had a national chain. Charles City is similar with having no national full service restaurants. Just fewer than half the locations observed didn't have any national chain restaurants. Of the eleven that did Pizza Hut and Subway were most prevalent. You can see the distribution of restaurants in the table below. The comparison cities had similar limited service restaurants.

Pizza Hut	5	Taco Bell	1	A&W	1
Subway	5	Little Caesars	1	Godfather's Pizza	1
Hardees	4	Dairy Queen	3	KFC	1
McDonalds	3	Sonic	1	Burger King	1

Limited service restaurants are abundant in Charles City. Retail gap information shows Charles City with an excess supply of these restaurants. Some of that excess supply will be filled in by kayakers.

One interesting discovery we came across was that eight of our comparison cities had breweries. When briefly mentioned at the public meeting many of the residents expressed interest in a brewery or winery opening up shop. This is consistent with kayakers want to experience local life. They want to experience the local flavor through beer. While it may be unfeasible to open up a brewery it maybe in the best interest for local bar owners to provided specialty or craft beers possibly indigenous to Iowa. More full service restaurants and bars that are locally owned and show what Charles City has to offer is recommended. This is what citizens and kayakers alike want and should be pursued heavily.

### *Mobile Food Vendors*

With an increase in use along the river there might be an increase in mobile food vendors. While this is may not be a huge concern we felt it prudent to give a basic overview of mobile food vending. There are two designations provided by the state for persons who supply food without a permanent location. One classification is Mobile Food Vendor which means the kitchen is part of a vehicle or a trailer. The other classification is a Pushcart which manually moved by a person. The Iowa State Department of Health has a simple application process for Mobile and Pushcart Food Vendors (28). The city also has the ability to further regulate location and time. This might be something to keep in mind of a mobile vendor would like to provide food for tourists. Designated vending areas could reduce congestion issues and free up parking.

### *Other industries*

While kayaking remains the primary reason for the tourists visit to the city, there are other amenities that can be found in many kayak park cities. Kayakers often travel with friends and family who want to explore the town. Other businesses and amenities that the comparison towns offer include recreation/aquatic centers, movie theaters, and ice arenas. In Colorado, some amenities that were provided included spas and golf courses.

Charles City is well situated with 2 golf courses, and a movie theater. The local YMCA has an aquatic center and is currently discussing a potential expansion with the City. This would be perfect for families. Citizens wanted to see a splash pad for children to play in near the Kayak Park.

Among surveyed other activities enjoyed were going to art galleries, local museums, farmers markets, arts and crafts shopping, and antiquing. Charles City has the ability to offer all of these activities. This information is best situated with those businesses that are already in place and can better situate themselves for a new population.

### **Development Recommendations**

The traditional city investment to encourage economic development comes in the form of streetscaping. Charles City currently has a beautiful streetscape. The main street area is quant, walkable, and clean. The building facades are in good shape. The city has done a good job of up keeping infrastructure. The buildings are also well situated to have ground floor retail. They have storefronts with large windows that attract foot traffic. The town is well situated to have ground floor commercial and upstairs office or residence space. The City does not need to focus on appearance or new building investment. This allows the City and Chamber of Commerce to focus its resources on building development and business recruitment. Business will be more attracted to Charles City not only to capitalize on the kayakers but if the buildings are easily converted and provide a central location to a wide population. Main Street provides an excellent location for retail and ground floor commercial.

#### **4. Help acquire financial incentives for redevelopment of upper floor office space in existing downtown buildings.**

There is mixed reaction to whether rent is too high in Charles City or not. The DPN consulting firm concluded that rent was too high. Rent failed to be reduced after appropriate lengths of



inoccupation of buildings. When discussed with a realtor they felt that the downtown did not have much occupiable space left so prices are at appropriate levels (29). The biggest concern is not whether buildings are priced correctly but their readiness to be occupied. As the city attracts tourists and creates more pedestrian traffic it is crucial that prime real estate on the ground floor is occupied by the type of businesses that rely on foot traffic. This could include business such as retail, restaurants, art galleries, and certain types of financial institutions. Offices and certain service industries can continue to take advantage of the centralized location of the downtown and maintain their customer based by moving to the top floor of buildings. However, this would only be an option if the upper floors were maintained and needed little renovation. The City can apply for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to help building owners renovate space.

The City of Charles City is not a CDBG entitlement city. This means that Charles City would have to apply for grants to the state. The state provided CDBG funds for a variety of development opportunities. They propose for the 2011 fiscal year that 20% of nearly six million dollars of funds will go to job creation and retention and enhancements. The Economic Development Set-Aside (EDSA), the Public Facilities Set-Aside (PFSA), and Career Link are three programs designed to help economic development. EDSA and PFSA are used in the form of forgivable loans or infrastructure projects (15).

The state also has a contingency fund which primarily finances projects for health and safety or projects that demonstrate sustainable community activities. These projects must be consistent with smart growth principles, provided a beneficial impact on standard of living and quality of life, be completed in a timely manner, and remain viable after CDBG assistance among other things (15).

5. **Utilize the empty lot at Clark and Main Streets as an asset to attract kayak-related businesses**

The empty lots on both Clark and Main Street hold some potential for the city to build a sustainable building and attracting a desirable business. Given its proximity to the river this houses the most potential for an outfitter or restaurant. It should be noted that as the economy grows so will demand for the lot. The city does not need to implement incentives such as Tax Increment Financing to encourage development when a lot like Clark and Main will be attracting development. This could be an opportunity for CDBG if the city wants to continue its “green” persona and construct an environmentally friendly building. This could attract a business who appreciates nature which aligns with the values that kayakers often have.

6. **Encourage Redevelopment along the south side of the river**

The River front will be the focal point for the city. While the downtown is adjacent to the riverfront it is important to remember that growth along the banks is a viable option. It is important to keep the attachment of business along the river. Along the southwest there are a few properties that would be very suitable for redevelopment. Keeping in mind what kayakers appreciate this area houses some of the most potential for development. The city should recruit a full service restaurant to enter this area. There are several limited service restaurants already

in the area. Give its proximity to downtown the area is not well suited to gain foot traffic so it has options for development. It could also remain as mostly green space and offer expansion of the riverfront park area.

## **Transportation Recommendations**

There are a few simple and key considerations to ensure visitors know where they are traveling. Wayfinding and proper signage will help ensure tourists and residents alike utilize the towns parking while easily accessing all the town has to offer.

### **7. Provide a temporary loading / unloading parking area close to the boat launch.**

It is important to start out by saying Charles City does not have a lack of parking. There is limited space along the river but the city has over 1,200 parking spots on the north side of the river alone. According to the 2000 US Census 84% of residents drove to work and only 7% carpool. This shows that Charles City is an auto centric city. There are very little options in way of public transit. Currently the Northern Iowa Council of Governments offers transit service in Floyd County. The service will pick you up for a nominal fee and transport your to where you need to go within the county.

The majority of parking is in parking lots with some parking along the streets. Most of the parking stalls are public. Some businesses have arrangements with the city leasing out 5-10 parking stalls. Having a majority of public parking allows for the city to set regulations about length of time for parking. This will allow for visitors to store their cars in appropriate areas for extended amounts of time.

### *Kayaker Parking*

Charles City has a similar amount of parking as our comparison cities. They averaged about 1,200 spots. Some cities were ruled out based on size and location of their white water park. The remaining had a very similar lay out as Charles City. They had large public lots for people to store their cars. They also had very small parking lots near the actual parks. They encourage users to drop of their boats and move their vehicles to a more permanent location.

We recommend that Charles City designate an area near the kayak course as a temporary parking lot for the loading and unloading of kayaks and other whitewater vessels. Our survey indicated that kayak park accessibility was one of the most important attributes that kayakers look for in park they may travel to. While kayaks are relatively lighter than other boats, they are still not easy to move over long distances and easy access to the river will improve the overall experience of those who visit Charles City.

Charles City should promote parking lots for extended parking. Proper signage can encourage kayakers to load their boats and move their cars to other public parking options. This would prevent congestion at the loading zone and promote safety discouraging kayakers from running across Clark Street with their equipment. Proper signage can alleviate confusion. Some cities implement parking meters that have button that allows for 15 minutes. This could be useful if enforced.

## *Business Parking*

When talking with one local realtor the biggest barrier for entry of new retail business was the parking ratios (29). With 117 businesses within a five minute walking distance of the 1,200 parking stalls the parking ratio is 10.25 parking spots per business. Given that most businesses are service related and do not require a large parking ratio there is a sufficient amount for new retail. As stated above the comparison cities had similar lay out as Charles City. Most of the businesses located in the downtowns were retail and restaurants.

When looking south of the river most businesses had onsite parking. Given the proximity of most business to the riverfront most patrons would be driving. There is adequate onsite parking for the Southside businesses. North of Gilbert street parking stalls should inform users that there is long term parking located north of the river. This will help prevent white water park users from storing their cars on private property.

### 8. **Provide Good Wayfinding**

To ensure that visitors are guided to the city properly proper signage is require. This could include signs that lead you to the downtown/white water park from the highway and other entrance points to the city. Furthermore, signs downtown that properly indicate where loading and long term parking is crucial. This will ensure people know where they can store their cars and anchor themselves in the downtown. Signs pointing to landmarks such as Central Park, the Riverfront Development, or certain key businesses can ensure that people have meeting points and do not get lost. It is especially crucial to post wayfinding signs near tourist attractions such as the riverfront development or the Floyd County Historical Museum.

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## Appendix 1: March 29, 2011 Public Meeting Break-Out Session Results

### Additional Answers (Not top choices)

<i>1. If a visitor asked you what one thing they should see or do while in Charles City, it would be...</i>	
<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge</li> <li>• Recreation Trail – Charlie Western</li> <li>• 2 golf courses</li> <li>• Cedar River</li> <li>• Summer “Party in the Park”</li> <li>• Local Shopping</li> </ul>	<p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The people</li> <li>• Cable Stay Bridge</li> <li>• Floyd County Museum</li> <li>• Carrie Catt Home and Museum</li> <li>• Fossil and Prairie Park</li> <li>• Movie Theatre</li> </ul>
<p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Golf Courses</li> <li>• Party in the park</li> <li>• New suspension/pedestrian bridge</li> <li>• Theatre</li> <li>• Carrie Chapman Catt house</li> <li>• FLW House</li> <li>• Natural Resources</li> <li>• Museums</li> <li>• Bike trails</li> <li>• Parks</li> <li>• Swimming pools</li> <li>• Skate parks</li> </ul>	<p>Group 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ped bridge</li> <li>• Art throughout the city and central park</li> <li>• Charles Theater</li> <li>• Bike trail</li> <li>• Shopping (Aroma's, Otto's Oasis, clothing stores, RC on Main, Hy-vee)</li> </ul>
<p>Group 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Museum</li> <li>• Put-put mini golf</li> <li>• Group 3 Cedar Lodge</li> <li>• 3 C's Restaurant</li> <li>• Chapman House</li> <li>• Golf courses</li> <li>• Aromas</li> <li>• Natural beauty</li> <li>• Moody Collection</li> </ul>	

<b>2. What about the Riverfront Park are you most excited about?</b>	
Group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to river</li> <li>• River quality improvement</li> <li>• Improved civic pride</li> <li>• Economic, business opportunities</li> </ul>	Group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive to all age groups (multiple areas of the park)</li> <li>• Unique</li> <li>• New Amphitheater (Jam Fest/Party in the Park)</li> </ul>
Group 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment for family</li> <li>• Biological/ water quality improvement</li> <li>• Ravine play area</li> <li>• Amphitheater</li> <li>• Tourist attraction</li> </ul>	Group 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible annual festival with park</li> <li>• New people at Party at the Park</li> <li>• Amphitheater</li> </ul>
Group 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Versatility</li> <li>• Visitors</li> <li>• Cross-generational opportunities</li> <li>• New business</li> </ul>	

<b>3. What about the Riverfront Park are you most concerned about?</b>	
Group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flooding</li> <li>• Safety (Physical, children)</li> <li>• Costs in general (maintenance, who is responsible?)</li> <li>• Parking issues</li> <li>• Camping space</li> <li>• Outfitters, equipment supply</li> <li>• Spectators</li> <li>• Community Support/Acceptance</li> </ul>	Group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liability</li> </ul>
Group 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trash</li> <li>• Concerned for the sharing of the course between kayakers and tubers</li> <li>• Getting C.C. residents excited for it</li> </ul>	Group 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it pay for maintenance?</li> <li>• Will it actually bring in money</li> <li>• Won't meet it's potential</li> <li>• Not enough activities/ community support</li> <li>• More people might lead to theft, etc.</li> </ul>
Group 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Keeping it 'fresh'</li> <li>• Authority over</li> <li>• Other cities copying</li> </ul>	



<b>4. How do you foresee using the Riverfront Park?</b>	
Group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tubing</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Ravine play for children</li> <li>• Competitions</li> <li>• Trying to kayak (Rentals)</li> </ul>	Group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spectating</li> <li>• Fishing</li> </ul>
Group 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kids</li> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• concerts</li> </ul>	Group 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educational tools</li> <li>• inspire critical thinking</li> <li>• kayaking, inner tubes</li> <li>• live video continue / possible wireless hotspots</li> </ul>
Group 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• picnics</li> <li>• hanging out</li> <li>• kayaking/tubing</li> </ul>	

<b>5. What business do you think is most lacking in Charles City?</b>	
Group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sushi</li> <li>• More camping space- especially during competitions</li> </ul>	Group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camping sites</li> </ul>
Group 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kayaking and other water sports gear rental</li> <li>• Deli</li> </ul>	Group 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outfitter – possibly local</li> <li>• Brewery/winery</li> <li>• Bar – wine tasting</li> </ul>
Group 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outfitter</li> <li>• Brewery</li> <li>• Places to eat</li> <li>• Entertainment - music</li> </ul>	

<b>6. What amenities or features would you most like to see included in the Riverfront park?</b>	
<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire pit/BBQ</li> <li>• Shower (Public, outdoors)</li> <li>• Seating, good viewing</li> <li>• On-site rental</li> </ul>	<p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map</li> <li>• Lilly pads</li> </ul>
<p>Group 3 – none</p>	<p>Group 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded picnic area</li> <li>• Recreational area</li> <li>• Access to park from top of river</li> <li>• Compass-large-sundial</li> <li>• Handicap access to all areas</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>Group 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wi-Fi connection</li> <li>• Concerts</li> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Go-karts</li> <li>• Picnic tables and benches</li> <li>• Expanded bike trail</li> <li>• Signage</li> </ul>	

<b>7. What winter activities do you want to see in the Riverfront Park?</b>	
<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowmobile trail</li> <li>• Ice fishing</li> </ul>	<p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire festival</li> </ul>
<p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowshoeing, cross country skiing</li> </ul>	<p>Group 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross country skiing</li> <li>• Snowshoeing</li> </ul>
<p>Group 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter golfing</li> <li>• Ice skating</li> <li>• Kites</li> <li>• Fires</li> </ul>	
















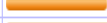







<b>8. What do you think the park should be named?</b>	
<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kayak Course to the Stars</li> <li>• Cedar River WW</li> <li>• Sherman House WW</li> <li>• Bridges WW</li> <li>• Rustic Waters</li> <li>• Erb's Sanctuary</li> </ul>	<p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charles City White Water Park</li> <li>• Choosing (write-in and newspaper vote)</li> </ul>
<p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Something with Cedar River in it</li> </ul>	<p>Group 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<p>Group 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No "chuck" in title</li> <li>• Include phrases like: Cedar River or White Water</li> </ul>	






## Appendix 2: U.S. Whitewater Parks





City	State	Population	Park Name
<b>Locust Fork</b>	<b>AI</b>	<b>1016</b>	<b>Boogie Bottoms</b>
Placerville	CA	9610	South Fork
<b>Kernville</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>1736</b>	<b>Kern River Valley Area</b>
<b>Avon</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>5561</b>	<b>Avon WWP</b>
Boulder	CO	300000	Boulder Creek WWP
<b>Breckenridge</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>2408</b>	<b>Breckenridge WWP</b>
<b>Buena Vista</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>2195</b>	<b>Buena Vista River Park</b>
Canon City	CO	16000	Canon City WWP
Durango	CO	15500	Animas River and Santa Rita Park
<b>Estes</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>5413</b>	<b>Estes WWP</b>
<b>Frisco</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>2443</b>	<b>Ten Mile Creek</b>
<b>Glenwood Springs</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>8564</b>	<b>Glenwood Springs WWP</b>
Golden	CO	17000	Clear Creek WWP
Gunnison	CO	15147	Gunnison WWP
<b>Lyons</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>1585</b>	<b>Lyons WWP</b>
Pueblo	CO	104000	Pueblo WWP
<b>Salida</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>5504</b>	<b>Salida WWP</b>
Steamboat Springs	CO	10000	Steamboat Springs WWP
<b>Vail</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>4585</b>	<b>Vail Whitewater Park</b>
<b>Tariffville</b>	<b>CT</b>	<b>1396</b>	<b>Tariffville Gorge</b>
Boise	ID	205314	Kelly's Whitewater Park
<b>Yorkville</b>	<b>IL</b>	<b>16717</b>	<b>Yorkville WWP</b>
South Bend	IN	107000	East Race Waterway
<b>Charlemont</b>	<b>MA</b>	<b>1400</b>	<b>Deerfield River</b>
<b>Dickerson</b>	<b>MD</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>Dickerson WW Course</b>
McHenry	MD	Unincorp	Adventure Sports Int'l WW Course
Potomac	MD	44882	Great Falls Park
Missoula	MT	108000	Brennans Wave
Charlotte	NC	709000	US National WW Center
<b>Franklin</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>3490</b>	<b>Nantahala Outdoor Center</b>
Reno	NV	220000	Truckee River Kayak Park
Rochester	NY	220000	Lock 32 WWP
<b>Estacada</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>2371</b>	<b>Upper Clackamas River</b>
Johnstown	PA	23906	Stoneycreek Conemaugh River
<b>Ducktown</b>	<b>TN</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>Ocoee River</b>
Fort Worth	TX	720000	Forth Worth WWP
Ogden	UT	83000	Ogden Kayak Rodeo Park
<b>Albright</b>	<b>WV</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>Cheat Canyon</b>
<b>Summersville</b>	<b>WV</b>	<b>3194</b>	<b>Gauley River</b>
Casper	WY	53000	Casper WWP

\*bolded locations were used as comparables

## Appendix 3: Detailed Kayak Survey Results

General Kayaking Survey			
<b>1. Please indicate your gender.</b>			
Male		64	83%
Female		13	17%
Total		77	100%
<b>2. Please select the category that includes your age.</b>			
17 or younger		0	0%
18-24		4	5%
25-34		15	19%
35-44		11	14%
45-54		23	29%
55-64		22	28%
65 or older		4	5%
Total		79	100%
<b>3. How many years have you been involved with the sport of kayaking?</b>			
Less than 1 year		3	4%
1-5 years		22	28%
6-10 years		17	22%
11-20 years		18	23%
20 or more years		18	23%
Total		78	100%
<b>4. On average, how many times a year do you go kayaking?</b>			
1 or less		1	1%
2-5 times		7	9%
6-10 times		12	15%
11-20 times		15	19%
Over 20 or more times in a year		43	55%
Total		78	100%
<b>5. How far do you usually travel to go Kayaking?</b>			
Less than 30 miles		7	9%
30-60 miles		13	17%
61-100 miles		15	20%
101-200 miles		19	25%
Over 200 miles		22	29%
Total		76	100%

6. How far would you travel to try a new kayak play park?			
Less than 30 miles		0	0%
30-60 miles		2	3%
61-100 miles		8	10%
101-200 miles		27	35%
201-400 miles		27	35%
Over 400 miles		14	18%
Total		78	100%

7. Who typically travels with you on your kayaking trips? (Choose all that apply)			
Family		30	
Friends		56	
Kayak club / association members		44	
I usually travel alone		11	

9. Can you please provide some other activities you participate in or would like to participate in during your kayaking trips?		
Camping	10	21%
Hiking	8	17%
Biking	7	15%
Eating	7	15%
Shopping	5	10%
Nature - Outdoors	4	8%
Drinking	3	6%
Rock Climbing	2	4%
Fishing	2	4%
Totals	48	100%

10. Where do you typically stay while on kayaking trips? (Choose all that apply)		
Friend or Relatives Residence	12	9%
Hotel / Motel / Cabin	46	34%
Tent	66	48%
RV	6	4%
Rental Unit	3	2%
In own vehicle	4	3%
Totals	137	100%

11. What do you do for food while on your kayaking trips?		
Brought and / or prepared your own	46	33%
Eat at local restaurants or vendors	92	67%
Totals	138	100%

12. How likely are you to visit the new Charles City kayak park after it opens in Spring 2011?			
1) Unlikely		3	4%
2) Small Chance		7	9%
3) Fair Chance		26	33%
4) Likely		20	26%
5) Very Likely		22	28%
Total		78	100%

Kayak Competitions Survey			
1. When and where did you last attend or participate in a kayak competition?			
March 2010	MO WW Championships. Fredrickstown, MO (St. Francis River)	11	
Aug 2010	Wausau, WI	5	
April 2009	Petersburg, IL	3	
April 2010	Kettle River, MN	1	
June 2010	Fibark. Salida, CO	1	
June 2009	Black Bear Hole. Lyons, CO	1	
2. Did you participate in or just observe the competition?			
Participated		17	68%
Observed		8	32%
Total		25	100%
3. What is your gender?			
Male		23	85%
Female		4	15%
Total		27	100%
4. Which age range best describes you?			
Under 18 years old		0	0%
18-24		2	7%
25-30		3	11%
31-40		7	26%
41-50		3	11%
51-60		6	22%
Over 60 years old		6	22%
Total		27	100%
5. Which events did you participate in or observe?			
Slalom	13	33%	
Rodeo / Freestyle	12	30%	
Sprint Races	15	37%	
Totals	40	100%	

6. Which event did you enjoy the most?		
Slalom	10	40%
Rodeo / Freestyle	8	32%
Sprint Races	7	28%
Totals	25	100%

7. Who all traveled with you to this competition?		
Friends	16	40%
Family	11	28%
Kayak Club Members or other Competitors	13	32%
Totals	40	100%

8. What are some activities that those who traveled with you chose to do during the days of the competition?		
Camping	7	19%
Local Activities – Tourism	6	17%
Hiking	5	14%
Watching	4	11%
Shopping	4	11%
Eating – Restaurants	4	11%
Kayak – Compete	3	8%
Bike	3	8%
Totals	36	100%

9. Was this competition hosted by the city during a festival or by another interest group?		
Yes, during a city festival or event	3	11%
Yes, but not during a city festival or event	1	3%
No, hosted by another organization	24	86%
Totals	28	100%






  

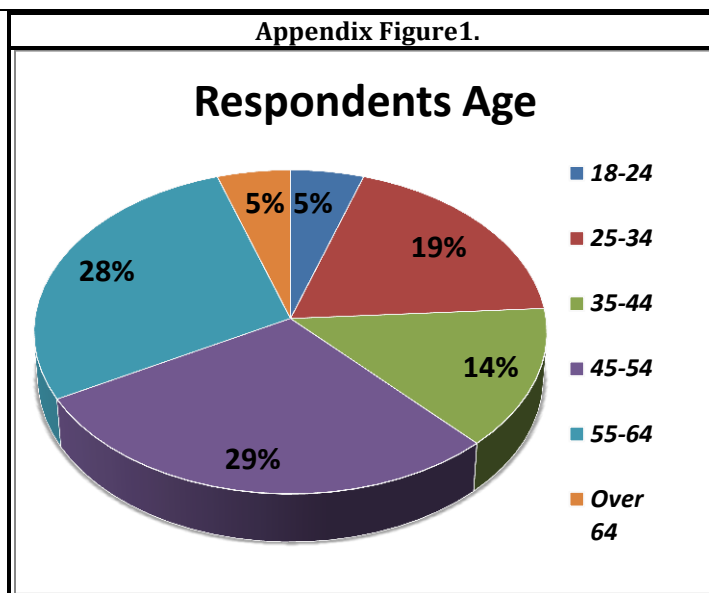
10. Where did your party choose to stay during the competition?		
Friend or Relatives Residence	3	6%
Hotel / Motel	13	28%
Tent	17	36%
RV	13	28%
In own vehicle	1	2%
Totals	47	100%

11. What aspects of the competition and the host town did you enjoy the most?		
Togetherness - Camaraderie	9	24%
Town Support – Friendliness	7	18%
Camping	6	16%
Food – Bars – Restaurants	6	16%
Competitive Atmosphere	3	8%
Local Sights and Attractions	3	8%
Prizes – Awards – Giveaways	2	5%
Local Nature and Beauty	2	5%
Totals	38	100%



12. If Charles City were to host a freestyle / rodeo kayak competition, how likely would you be to attend either to compete or to watch?			
1) Very Unlikely		1	4%
2) Somewhat Unlikely		5	16%
3) Fair Chance		6	21%
4) Good Chance		6	21%
5) Very Likely		10	36%
Total		28	100%



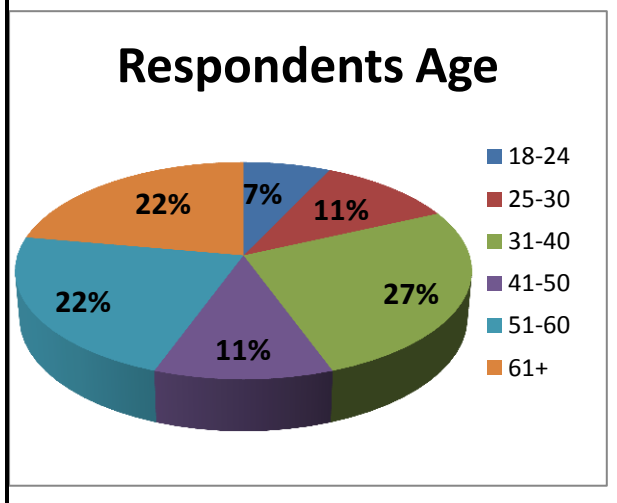
**Appendix Table 1.**

Lodging Choice	Count	Percent
At Friends or Relatives	12	9%
Hotel / Motel	46	34%
Tent	66	48%
RV	6	4%
Rental Unit	3	2%
In own vehicle	4	3%
Totals	137	100%

**Appendix Table 2.**

Chance of Visit	Count	Percent
Unlikely	3	4%
Small Chance	7	9%
Fair Chance	26	33%
Likely to Visit	20	26%
Very Likely to Visit	22	28%
Totals	78	100%

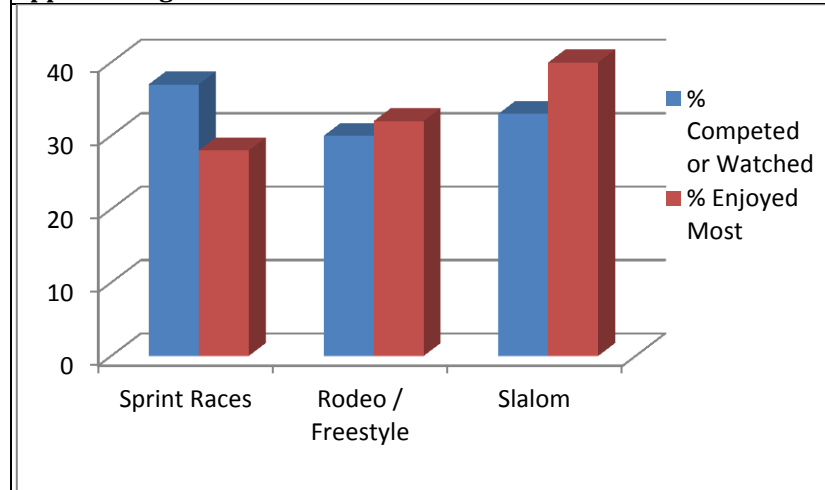
**Appendix Figure 2.**



**Appendix Table 3.**

Chance of Visit	Count
Unlikely	1
Small Chance	5
Fair Chance	6
Likely to Visit	6
Very Likely to Visit	10

**Appendix Figure 3.**



<b>Appendix Table 4.</b>		
<b>Aspect of Host Town</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Togetherness/Camaraderie	9	24%
Town Support/Friendliness	7	18%
Camping	6	16%
Food – Bars – Restaurants	6	16%
Competitive Atmosphere	3	8%
Local Sights and Attractions	3	8%
Prizes–Awards–Giveaways	2	5%
Local Nature and Beauty	2	5%
Totals	38	100%

## Appendix 4: Competition Sponsors

### Sponsors Of Midwest Events

Accent Paddles  
 Adventure Technology  
 Advocare  
 Badger State Boating Society  
 Bear Paw Outdoor Adventure  
 Hoigaard'S  
 IGA  
 Immersion Research  
 Jackson Kayak  
 Level Six  
 Midwest Mountaineering  
 Mitchell Paddles  
 Mohawk  
 MTI  
 Noodles & Company  
 Rapid Riders  
 Sanborn Canoe Company  
 Seals  
 Shred Ready  
 Skihut  
 Stohlquist Waterware  
 Stonyboater Paddle Wax  
 Sun Printing  
 Whitecap Kayak  
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 3B Media  
 4 CRS  
 ACA  
 Adventure Unlimited  
 Aire  
 Alabama Outdoors  
 Allcomm Wireless  
 Alpine Lumber  
 American Canoe Association  
 American Whitewater  
 At Paddles  
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